

What is stress?

Stress is a feeling of being under abnormal pressure. This pressure can come from different aspects of your day to day life. Such as an increased workload, a transitional period, an argument you have with your family or new and existing financial worries. You may find that it has a cumulative effect, with each stressor building on top of one another.

During these situations you may feel threatened or upset and your body might create a stress response. This can cause a variety of physical symptoms, change the way you behave, and lead you to experience more intense emotions.

Stress affects us in a number of ways, both physically and emotionally and in varying intensities.

How can I identify the signs of stress?

Everyone experiences stress. However, when it is affecting your life, health and wellbeing, it is important to tackle it as soon as possible, and while stress affects everyone differently, there are common signs and symptoms you can look out for:

- Feelings of constant worry or anxiety
- Feelings of being overwhelmed
- Difficulty concentrating
- Mood swings or changes in your mood
- Irritability or having a short temper
- Difficulty relaxing
- Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Eating more or less than usual
- Changes in your sleeping habits
- Using alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs to relax
- Aches and pains, particularly muscle tension
- Diarrhoea and constipation
- Feelings of nausea or dizziness
- Loss of sex drive

If you are experiencing these symptoms for a prolonged period, and feel they are affecting your everyday life or are making you feel unwell, you should speak to your GP. You can ask for information about the support services and treatments available to you.

