

# The Impact of Stress and Ways to Manage it

A UK-wide survey, carried out in 2018, found that almost three-quarters of adults (73%) had, at some point over the year before, felt so stressed that they were overwhelmed or unable to cope. The study was commissioned by the Mental Health Foundation and is believed to be the largest and most comprehensive stress survey ever carried out across the UK with 4,619 people taking part.

Sometimes stress can be a positive force, motivating you to perform well at a given time, on a critical work task, for example. But more often than not stress is a negative force. When we feel stressed adrenaline kicks in immediately to help prepare you for a physical response – your heart pumps faster, your breathing rate picks up and more blood flows to your muscles. You are primed for action.

About ten minutes later, cortisol is released. Cortisol helps to maintain those high energy levels by turning stored fat and carbohydrates into simple fats and sugars to use as fuel to deal with the 'crisis'. It also sharpens our senses before assisting with the physiological 'return to normal' process. You are primed for action but then there is no action.

If your stress response doesn't stop firing, and these stress levels stay elevated far longer than is necessary for survival, it can take a toll on your health.

Chronic stress can cause a variety of symptoms

and can affect your overall well-being. Symptoms of chronic stress include:

- Irritability
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Headaches
- Insomnia

Women who are stressed are more likely than men who are stressed to experience depression and anxiety.

### What can we do to help ourselves?

We can try and take more control by understanding the impact our lifestyle is having on our health. The following wellness changes can help:

- Deep breathing exercises.
- Meditation or mindfulness.
- Take time for yourself.
- Get enough sleep.
- Eat the right foods – eat foods with B vitamins, such as bananas, fish, avocados, chicken, and dark green, leafy vegetables. Studies show that B vitamins can help relieve stress by regulating nerves and brain cells.
- Get moving, even just moving away from your desk and outside for a few minutes can help.
- Talk to friends or family.
- Get professional help.

For more tips and advice go to <http://www.womenshealthhub.co.uk>



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