

STRESS

WHAT IS IT AND HOW TO SPOT IT



Stress is a change in emotions, behavior, and/or physical functioning that happens when you feel threatened. Emotional changes include how you feel “on the inside” (your mood, for example). Behavior changes include changes in what you do or how you act. Physical functioning changes include actual changes in how your body functions or feels.

The first step to managing stress is to notice how it affects you. Once you know how to spot stress, you can catch it early and work on managing it. Stress affects us all differently, but most people experience the same effects over time.

HOW TO USE THIS HANDOUT

1. Review the list below and circle those things that usually happen to you when stressed.
2. Watch for these changes in your daily life.
3. When you notice one or more of these changes, use relaxation or some other stress management technique to break up the stress.

Physical

Headaches

Stomach problems

Muscle aches/tension

Flushed/warm face

Increased heart rate

Decreased/increased appetite

Decreased/increased sleep

Increased muscle/joint pain

Being ill more than usual

Emotional

Sad

Angry

Impatient, irritable

Feeling Guilty

Nervous/anxious

Lose interest in things

Hard to concentrate

Hopelessness

Thoughts of suicide/homicide

Behavioral

Increased substance use (cigarettes,
alcohol, drugs, caffeine)

Isolate/withdraw from people

More aggressive (yelling, swearing,
throwing things, fighting)

Increased/decreased eating

Decreased activity level

Talking more/less

Arguing more/snapping at people

It is important to remember that there are other physical, emotional and behavioral changes that can occur with stress. You might notice some in yourself that are not on this list. Some of these changes can also result from a medical condition. Talk to your doctor about these problems.