



Stress Questionnaire

Because everyone reacts to stress in his or her own way, no one stress test can give you a complete diagnosis of your stress levels. This stress test is intended to give you an overview only. Please see a Stress Management Consultant for a more in depth analysis.

Answer all the questions, but just tick one box that applies to you, either yes or no. Answer yes, even if only part of a question applies to you. Take your time, but please be completely honest with your answers:

		Yes	No
1	I frequently bring work home at night		
2	Not enough hours in the day to do all the things that I must do		
3	I deny or ignore problems in the hope that they will go away		
4	I do the jobs myself to ensure they are done properly		
5	I underestimate how long it takes to do things		
6	I feel that there are too many deadlines in my work / life that are difficult to meet		
7	My self confidence / self esteem is lower than I would like it to be		
8	I frequently have guilty feelings if I relax and do nothing		
9	I find myself thinking about problems even when I am supposed to be relaxing		
10	I feel fatigued or tired even when I wake after an adequate sleep		
11	I often nod or finish other peoples sentences for them when they speak slowly		
12	I have a tendency to eat, talk, walk and drive quickly		
13	My appetite has changed, I have either a desire to binge or have a loss of appetite / may skip meals		
14	I feel irritated or angry if the car or traffic in front seems to be going too slowly/ I become very frustrated at having to wait in a queue		
15	If something or someone really annoys me I will bottle up my feelings		
16	When I play sport or games, I really try to win whoever I play		
17	I experience mood swings, difficulty making decisions, concentration and memory is impaired		
18	I find fault and criticise others rather than praising, even if it is deserved		
19	I seem to be listening even though I am preoccupied with my own thoughts		
20	My sex drive is lower, can experience changes to menstrual cycle		
21	I find myself grinding my teeth		
22	I have an increase in muscular aches and pains especially in the neck, head, lower back, shoulders		
23	I am unable to perform tasks as well as I used to, my judgment is clouded or not as good as it was		
24	I find I have a greater dependency on alcohol, caffeine, nicotine or drugs		
25	I find that I don't have time for many interests / hobbies outside of work		
A yes answer score = 1 (one), and a no answer score = 0 (zero).			
TOTALS			



Your score:

Most of us can manage varying amounts of pressure without feeling stressed. However too much or excessive pressure, often created by our own thinking patterns and life experiences, can overstretch our ability to cope and then stress is experienced.

4 points or less:

You are least likely to suffer from stress-related illness.

5 - 13 points:

You are more likely to experience stress related ill health either mental, physical or both. You would benefit from stress management / counseling or advice to help in the identified areas.

14 points or more:

You are the most prone to stress showing a great many traits or characteristics that are creating un-healthy behaviours. This means that you are also more likely to experience stress & stress-related illness e.g. diabetes, irritable bowel, migraine, back and neck pain, high blood pressure, heart disease/strokes, mental ill health (depression, anxiety & stress).

It is important to seek professional help or stress management counseling. Consult your medical practitioner (GP).

Tips to help improve your score

Review the questions that you scored yes:

- ♦ See if you can reduce, change or modify this trait.
- ♦ Start with the ones that are easiest & most likely to be successful for you.
- ♦ Only expect small changes to start with, it takes daily practice to make any change.
- ♦ Support from friends, family/colleagues will make the process easier and more enjoyable.
- ♦ Professional help is always available & your GP is a good place to start.

To find a stress management consultant in your area go to www.isma.org.uk and click on 'Find a Consultant / Practitioner'



Top Ten Stress Busting Tips

"The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them at work."

Health and Safety Executive

1. Learn to manage your time more effectively

We waste a lot of time doing unimportant tasks, especially when stressed, so prioritise your day and do the important jobs first. The unimportant ones can wait, and often they will disappear completely leaving you time to do other things. Also, do not put off the unpleasant tasks – avoidance causes a great deal of stress. Give unpleasant tasks a high priority and do them first.

2. Adopt a healthy lifestyle

If we eat a healthy diet, exercise regularly and ensure we get adequate sleep and rest, our body is then better able to cope with stress, should it occur. If this is not the case, then this may be a warning sign so don't ignore it. Engaging in some form of physical activity may help you by working off the biochemical and physical changes that occur within your body due to stress. Relaxation also helps your body return to its normal healthy state. Good relaxation techniques, include breathing exercises, massage and a variety of complimentary therapies can all help.

3. Know your limitations and do not take on too much

We can cause ourselves a great deal of stress because we do not want to let people down. We then end up doing more than we should. Learn to delegate effectively and be assertive so that you can say 'No' without feeling guilty yourself, or upsetting or offending others.

4. Find out what causes you stress

Take time to discover what is worrying you and try to change your thoughts and behaviour(s) to reduce it. A stress assessment can help you to fully understand the causes, the implications to your health and how to manage, cope and make any necessary changes.

5. Avoid unnecessary conflict

Do not be too argumentative. Is it really worth the stress? Look for win - win situations. Look for a resolution to a dispute where both parties can achieve a positive outcome. Find out what the real cause of the problem is and deal with it.



6. Accept the things you cannot change

Changing a difficult situation is not always possible. If this proves to be the case, recognise and accept things as they are and concentrate on all that you do have control over. Managing change effectively is essential or else performance will be reduced.

7. Take time out to relax and recharge your batteries

You will perform more effectively during work if you regularly take a short 10 / 15 minute break, easily making up the time you used relaxing. Alongside this, at least one annual break of at least 10-14 continuous days is recommended.

8. Find time to meet friends

Friends can ease work troubles and help us see things in a different way. The activities we engage in with friends help us relax and we will often have a good laugh. It boosts the immune system that is often depleted during stress.

9. Try to see things differently, develop a positive thinking style

If something is concerning you, try to see it differently. Talk over your problem with somebody before it gets out of proportion. Often, talking to a friend/colleague/family member will help you see things from a different and less stressful perspective. You may also need to consider professional help in order to achieve the desired outcome and prevent ill health and / or burnout.

10. Avoid alcohol, nicotine and caffeine as coping mechanisms

Long term, these faulty coping mechanisms will just add to the problem. For example, caffeine and nicotine are stimulants – too much and the body reacts to this with the stress response, increasing or even causing anxiety symptoms. Alcohol is a depressant!



What is the Fight or Flight Response?

The fight or flight response, or stress response, is triggered by a release of hormones either prompting us to *stay and fight* or *run away and escape*. So the 'fight' could be getting angry and shouting and the 'flight' could be storming out of a room and maybe saying nothing. These types of responses are your body's reaction to danger and were created during evolution to help you survive real stressful and life-threatening situations. Now, in today's world, your body still has the fight or flight response but the 'dangers' that trigger it are frequently not life threatening situations – but caused by merely just thinking negatively about something, such as:

- ✗ Giving a big presentation
- ✗ Being stuck in traffic making you late for work or a meeting
- ✗ Trying to make a deadline at work / working overtime
- ✗ A meeting with the boss
- ✗ Disagreements at work/office politics
- ✗ Worry about losing your job
- ✗ Constant changes at work/being asked to do things you can't or don't want to do
- ✗ Financial or relationship problems

All these examples of commonplace situations that you could find yourself in, are not truly dangerous, however you will still send a 'danger' message to the brain with your negative 'oh no' thoughts ... but it's a false message! Your stress response is triggered and your body reacts as if it was dangerous or life threatening because the brain does NOT differentiate between real and perceived threats. This response is there to save your life and the brain will not take a risk, so it launches the stress response every time ... just in case!

The stress response can be triggered in a single instant, but how quickly you calm down and return to your natural state is going to vary from person to person (and on what caused it). Typically it takes 20 to 30 minutes for your body to return to normal and to calm down.

That's ok if this response is a one off or just an occasional occurrence (acute), your body has time to recover and return to its normal state. However, if you repeatedly trigger the stress response with on-going problems and negative thoughts, then your body has very little chance to recover. Living in a prolonged state of high alert and stress (when there isn't any real reason for it) can be the start of chronic stress and can be detrimental to both your physical and mental health.



During the fight or flight response your body is trying to prioritise what it needs to do that will save your life, so anything it doesn't need to maintain for your immediate survival, is stopped. This means that the digestive and reproductive systems, tissue repair, the immune system and several other non-essential functions are all temporarily halted. Instead, your body prioritises all its energy on the most crucial functions.

This is why chronic, long term stress can lead to ill health when these otherwise essential functions and systems are repeatedly shut down.

These are just some of the changes you may experience or notice during the stress response:

- ◆ Dry mouth
- ◆ Colour drains from your face
- ◆ Lump in the throat
- ◆ Nausea
- ◆ "Goose bumps"
- ◆ Palpitations
- ◆ Cold extremities
- ◆ Mental alertness increases for quick decision making
- ◆ Hyperventilating
- ◆ Tension of muscles e.g. shoulders, thighs
- ◆ Sweating
- ◆ Butterflies in the stomach
- ◆ Urge to go to the toilet
- ◆ Feeling of panic
- ◆ Reduced perception of pain
- ◆ Pupils dilate/ peripheral vision is also heightened.
- ◆ Your hearing becomes sharper

Use our free downloads:

The 60 Second Tranquiliser: To learn how to calm yourself when feeling stressed

How to Identify Stress: To review your own physical, emotional, psychological and behavioural signs of stress.

To find one of our **Stress Management Consultants** who can help and advice you on positive approaches to managing your stress please go to our **Members Directory**.



How to Identify Stress

Recognising Stress

"The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them at work." HSE

What to Look for:

These are some of the many symptoms that are indicators of too much pressure that can come from yourself, work, home, or any combination of these which may include all three. (Please note: there can be other causes so please check with your GP). People exhibiting signs of stress, will eventually become less productive and less effective in the workplace. This is known as PRESENTEEISM. Tick any of the symptoms you have.

Psychological Signs	Emotional Signs	Physical Signs	Behavioural Signs
☐ Inability to concentrate or make simple decisions ☐ Memory lapses ☐ Becoming rather vague ☐ Easily distracted ☐ Less intuitive & creative ☐ Undue worrying ☐ Negative thinking ☐ Depression & anxiety ☐ Prone to accidents ☐ Insomnia or waking tired	☐ Tearful ☐ Irritable ☐ Mood swings ☐ Extra sensitive to criticism ☐ Defensive ☐ Feeling out of control ☐ Lack of motivation ☐ Angry ☐ Frustrated ☐ Lack of confidence ☐ Lack of self-esteem	☐ Aches/pains & muscle tension/grinding teeth ☐ Frequent colds/infections ☐ Allergies/rashes/skin irritations ☐ Constipation/diarrhea/ IBS ☐ Weight loss or gain ☐ Indigestion/heartburn/ ulcers ☐ Hyperventilating/lump in the throat/pins & needles ☐ Dizziness/palpitations ☐ Panic attacks/nausea ☐ Physical tiredness ☐ Menstrual changes/loss of libido/sexual problems ☐ Heart problems/high blood pressure	☐ Not making time for relaxation or pleasurable activities ☐ Increased reliance on alcohol, smoking, caffeine, recreational or illegal drugs ☐ Becoming a workaholic ☐ Poor time management and / or poor standards of work ☐ Absenteeism ☐ Self neglect / change in appearance ☐ Social withdrawal ☐ Relationship problems ☐ Recklessness ☐ Aggressive / anger outbursts ☐ Nervousness ☐ Uncharacteristically lying



How many symptoms do you have?

The symptoms that affect you will often accumulate until you are forced to take notice of them.

Don't rationalise the symptoms away. If you are not sure – always consult your GP.

It is often the behavioural symptoms that are noticed, as they are more obvious, but by this time stress has been going on for many months, maybe even a year or more. Consider seeing a stress management counsellor.

Always consult your GP if you are concerned about your health.