

# STRESS AT WORK

## STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE

Stress is primarily the emotional and physical strain an individual experiences in response to pressure from the outside world.

Some stress is positive and necessary to perform work and other tasks. However, if it is intense, constant and the individual finds themselves unable to cope, then stress can have adverse effects. Left untreated, stress can lead to physical illness and psychological disorders, which can have a substantial impact on our daily lives.

Stress in the workplace is a growing problem. Whilst worker compensation claims have generally steadied over recent years, and even fallen in some areas, stress related claims are continuing to rise. Busy lifestyles are combining with increasing work pressure to create highly stressful environments for individuals.

## SYMPTOMS

- Irritability, over-sensitivity and intolerance
- Depression and anxiety
- Difficulty with decision making
- Poor concentration, memory and racing thoughts
- Negative thinking and hostility toward others
- Decreased work performance and frequent absences from work
- Withdrawal
- Loss of interest
- Physical symptoms such as disturbed sleep, loss of appetite, headaches, excessive sweating, high blood pressure, fatigue, nausea and susceptibility to illness
- Panic attacks

## CAUSES

- Unreasonable performance demands, excessive work hours, work overload and insufficient training
- Poor communication including excessive supervision, unclear role and responsibilities, critical/insufficient performance feedback
- Physical environment including uncomfortable work space, noisy or overcrowded environment and health and safety risks
- High staff turnover, limited promotion opportunities and job insecurity
- Bullying or harassment
- Competition or conflict
- Poor relationships with superiors or co-workers

## TREATMENT

- Psychological intervention and/or counselling
- Employee Assistance Programs
- Coping skills training
- Relaxation and meditation
- Support groups (provide social support and understanding)

## HOW TO HELP YOURSELF

Look after yourself by ensuring you take your breaks, eat and sleep well, exercise and relax. Organise your time, workload and work space to reduce stress on both your mind and body. Prioritise tasks and break large tasks into a series of small manageable steps. Talk to others and ask for help when needed. Take time out to reflect and breathe.

## HOW CAN COLLEAGUES HELP?

To assist those experiencing high amounts of stress it is vital for colleagues to express understanding, empathy and support.

While some people may primarily need reassurance and emotional support, others may require help with their work schedule.

It is important that colleagues, and workplaces, encourage staff to take steps to keep stress under control, and take action when it is becoming too much.

## REFERRAL/SUPPORT INFO

**Drug ARM** 1300 656 800  
info@drugarm.com.au  
drugarm.com.au

**Drug ARM Central Intake**  
07 3620 8880

**Lifeline Australia** 13 11 14  
24/7 crisis support

**Or contact your local GP (General Practitioner)**

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## REFERENCES

1 Cassey, L., & Ling, R. P. T. (2014). Stress and wellbeing in Australia survey 2014. Australian Psychological Society.



AWARENESS  
REHABILITATION  
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FOR MORE INFORMATION  
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