

Stress and Anxiety

Stress is defined as a demand placed on your brain or body. It's a part of the body's natural flight or fight response. Oftentimes, competing demands can create stress. An event that makes you nervous or frustrated can make you feel stressed. Common causes of stress include: moving, having a baby, starting a new school or job, having an illness or injury, getting married, and death or illness in a family member or friend.

Anxiety is a feeling of fear, worry, or unease. Sometimes it can be a reaction to a stress that can result from work, school, personal relationships, emotional trauma, financial concerns, a major event or performance, side effect of certain medications, lack of oxygen, and many others. Other times, a person can suffer from anxiety and not be able to identify any significant stresses in their life.

Common physical symptoms include:

- stomachache
- headache
- rapid breathing
- fast heartbeat
- shaking
- dizziness
- frequent urination
- change in appetite
- trouble sleeping
- diarrhea
- fatigue

In addition to physical symptoms, stress and anxiety can cause feelings of impending doom, difficulty concentrating, irrational anger, restlessness, and panic or nervousness, especially in social settings.

Drugs that contain stimulants can make stress and anxiety worse. This includes thyroid medications, asthma inhalers, diet pills, caffeine, and cocaine.

Stress and anxiety are not always bad. They can help you overcome a challenge or dangerous situation. For example, it can help motivate you to prepare for a test or job interview. However, if stress or anxiety interfere with your daily life, it may be a sign to seek professional help. You are not alone. An estimated 40 million Americans live with some sort of anxiety disorder.

Tips to reduce stress and anxiety include: eating a balanced diet, getting enough sleep, exercise (even just a quick walk or stretch), limiting caffeine and alcohol, talking to a friend (or talking yourself through it), meditating, deep breathing, laughter, settling for your best rather than perfection, accepting that you cannot control everything, and recognizing things that trigger your anxiety or stress.