

The Effects of Stress on Your Body

Stress is a normal physical and emotional reaction to life events. Everyone experiences stress at some point in their lives. Everyday obligations such as job and family, as well as major life events such as a new illness, war, or the death of a loved one, can cause stress.

Stress can be helpful to your health in short-term scenarios. It can assist you in dealing with potentially dangerous circumstances. When you are stressed, your body responds by producing hormones that increase your heart rate and breathing rate, as well as prepare your muscles to respond.

However, if your stress response does not cease firing and your stress levels remain elevated for much longer than is essential for survival, it can harm your health. Chronic stress can create many symptoms and harm your overall health. Chronic stress symptoms include:

- irritability
- anxiety
- depression
- headaches
- insomnia

Central Nervous and Endocrine Systems

The "fight or flight" reaction is controlled by your central nervous system (CNS). The hypothalamus in your brain sets the ball rolling by asking your adrenal glands to release the stress chemicals adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones increase your heart rate and transfer blood to the regions of your body that need it the most in an emergency, such as your muscles, heart, and other vital organs.

When the perceived fear has passed, the hypothalamus should instruct all systems to return to normal. The reaction will continue if the CNS does not return to normal or if the stressor does not disappear.

Chronic stress is also a component in behaviors such as bingeing or undereating, binge drinking, drug or alcohol misuse, and social disengagement.

Respiratory and Cardiovascular Systems

Stress hormones have an impact on both your respiratory and cardiovascular systems. During the stress reaction, you breathe quicker to send oxygen-rich blood to your body as rapidly as possible. If you already have a lung condition, such as asthma or emphysema, stress can make it considerably more difficult to breathe.

When you are stressed, your heart beats quicker. Stress hormones force your blood vessels to tighten, diverting more oxygen to your muscles, giving you more strength to act. However, this boosts your blood pressure.