

CARERS FACT SHEET 4a

Your Health Matters – Stress Management

What is stress?

‘Stress is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them’

Stress is different for each person. Some people find certain types of stress stimulate action or activity. Other people may find the same stress is de-motivating.

There is no simple way to describe stress as it is so different.

Stress can be caused by things at work or by things outside of work, or both.

What symptoms may indicate stress?

There are hundreds of indicators of stress but the most common are:

- Difficulty sleeping
- Poor concentration
- Increased irritability
- Smoking more
- Increased drinking of caffeine or alcohol
- Eating more or less food than normal
- Feeling overwhelmed, leading to an inability to make decisions
- Always feeling that something needs to be done
- Inability to simply sit and relax
- Always rushing about
- Feeling run down
- Headaches
- Sweaty hands
- Knots in your neck
- A lump in your throat
- Dry mouth
- Anxiety

If unmanaged, stress can lead to increased problems with ill health if it is prolonged or intense e.g.

- Heart disease
- Back pain
- Gastro-intestinal problems
- Minor illnesses
- Depression

You should always consult your doctor if you experience worrying symptoms

How can you manage stress?

- Eat healthily
- Stop smoking
- Limit alcohol consumption
- Limit caffeine intake
- Keep physically active
- Try relaxation techniques e.g. meditation, yoga, breathing exercises
- Talk to family and/or friends about how you are feeling
- Make sure you have a plan for any emergency or difficulty that might arise
- Maintain your normal interests or develop a new one e.g. dancing, art and craft, swimming, computer skills
- If you are working, talk directly to your employer or take advantage of any support schemes

Some suggestions for coping in the short term

- Take some deep breaths and slowly release
- Clench your fists and release
- Punch a cushion or pillow
- Count to ten
- Have a relaxing bath
- Go for a walk
- Talk to a friend or contact a carers helpline