



Understanding Stress Management

Understanding stress management and the impact this could be having on your health and wellbeing is a huge factor when it comes to the quality of your day-to-day life. Feeling stressed? Are you accepting it or doing something about it? Could you be happier by making a few lifestyle changes?

www.thehealthyemployee.co.uk/



The Paper Industry Technical Association (PITA) is an independent organisation which operates for the general benefit of its members – both individual and corporate – dedicated to promoting and improving the technical and scientific knowledge of those working in the UK pulp and paper industry. Formed in 1960, it serves the Industry, both manufacturers and suppliers, by providing a forum for members to meet and network; it organises visits, conferences and training seminars that cover all aspects of papermaking science. It also publishes the prestigious journal *Paper Technology International* and the *PITA Annual Review*, both sent free to members, and a range of other technical publications which include conference proceedings and the acclaimed *Essential Guide to Aqueous Coating*.



Can stress be positive?

- Stress can sometimes be positive
- Increase alertness and help you perform better in certain situations
- Excessive or prolonged stress can contribute to illness

What can prolonged stress lead to?

- Lower immunity levels
- Digestive and intestinal difficulties
- Depression and anxiety

What happens to my body when I experience stress?

- Sleeping problems
- Sweating
- Appetite changes
- Headaches
- Muscle tension
- Pain
- Nausea
- Indigestion
- Dizziness
- Heart palpitations
- Increased blood pressure
- In the long-term, increased risk of heart attacks and stroke

What are the behavioural and emotional effects of stress?

- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Low self-esteem
- Becoming withdrawn, indecisive and tearful
- Constant worry and racing thoughts
- Irrational behaviour
- Being verbally or physically aggressive

What causes stress?

- Work, money matters and relationships with partners, children or other family members
- Major upheavals and life events – divorce, unemployment, moving house and bereavement
- Minor irritations – feeling undervalued at work or arguing with a family member
- Sometimes, there are no obvious causes

Relationships and stress:

- Your partner, parents, child, friend or colleague, can increase your stress levels

Work-Life Balance and Stress:

- 1% of the UK working population works 45 hours+ per week
- Neglecting aspects of your life because of work may increase stress
- In 2008, mental health accounted for 442,000 cases of work-related illnesses



Money and stress:

- StepChange Debt Charity found an increased demand of 56% for debt advice and support from 2012-2014
- 42% of those seeking debt help had been prescribed medication by their GP to help them cope
- Chronic stress and debt can result in depression and anxiety, and has been highlighted as a factor linked to suicidal thoughts and attempts

Smoking, drinking, drug use and stress:

- Alcohol may make existing mental health problems worse. It is important to know the recommended limits and drink responsibly.
- Prescription drugs which may have been prescribed for very good reasons, can also cause mental and physical health problems if used for long periods of time.
- Street drugs, such as cannabis and ecstasy, are usually taken for recreational purposes. Problems start as your body gets used to repeated use of the drug, leading to increased doses to maintain the same effect.

How can you help yourself?

1. Realise when stress is causing you a problem
 - Try to make the connection between feeling tired or ill and the pressures you are faced with
 - Look out for physical warnings such as tense muscles, over-tiredness, headaches or migraines
2. Identify the cause
 - Sort the possible reasons for your stress into three categories: Those with a practical solution, those that will get better in time, those you can't do anything about
 - Try to release the worry of those in the second and third groups
3. Review your lifestyle
 - Are you taking on too much?
 - Are there things you are doing which could be handed over to someone else?
 - Can you do things in a more leisurely way?
 - Do you have an understanding of stress management?
 - To act on the answer to these questions, you may need to prioritise things you are trying to achieve and reorganise your life
 - This will help to release pressure than can come from trying to do everything at once

Remember to seek health and support when you need it:

- It is okay to ask for professional help
- It is important to know that you can get help as soon as possible, and that you deserve to get better
- The first person to approach is your family doctor, they can give advice about treatment, and may refer you to another local professional
- Other charities that could offer assistance include, Anxiety UK, Citizens Advice or StepChange

Our Health and Wellbeing Roadshows are a snippet of our full catalogue of Workplace Wellbeing services and events and are constructed of many healthy lifestyle zones, including stress management, enabling employees to connect the dots when it comes to living a happy and healthy life.