

# Stress Management

## Weight Management Service Physiotherapy Department

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### What is Stress?

Stress is the response that occurs when there is an imbalance between the demands made on you and your ability to cope with those demands.

Dealing with a stress is such a normal day to day occurrence, that it may become difficult to identify the things in our lives that are causing excessive stress, or even at times recognising that you are feeling stressed.

**Constructive stress** – a certain level of stress is necessary to provide the motivation needed for daily life

**Destructive stress** – This occurs when the stress response is stimulated and there is either no outlet or failure to realise that you are becoming excessively stressed.

This stress presents itself in three main ways:

- **Biological**  
i.e. increased heart rate, headaches, palpitations
- **Psychological**  
i.e. anger, lack of confidence, reduced concentration
- **Behavioural**  
i.e. comfort eating, nail biting, insomnia

Destructive stress can contribute to a lack of wellbeing.

Some health problems are worsened by destructive stress, such as hypertension, asthma, backache, irritable bowel syndrome and eczema

### Not all stress is bad!

### How does the Body react to stress?

When you experience a stressful situation your body naturally releases a hormone known as adrenaline.

This gears the body for action by:

- increasing the heart rate
- increasing blood pressure
- increasing respiratory rate
- increasing muscle tension
- increasing sweating
- increasing mental arousal

This is known as the 'fight or flight' response.

### Fight or Flight

This is a built in defence mechanism and we cannot survive without it.

It helps us deal with danger and challenge fear.

Once the stressful situation has passed, then a reverse mechanism takes over and the body returns to its normal state.

## Suggestions on how to cope with stress

- Can you ask anyone for help?
- Can you talk it through with someone?
- Write down your stressors and the practical ways of dealing with them
- Prioritise
- Have a laugh
- Think positively
- Relaxation/breathing control
- Do moderate exercise



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