

## Managing stress

### What is stress?

Stress is the mind and body's response to challenges. You may feel:

- like you have a headache or an upset stomach
- irritated or restless
- tension in the jaw, chest, or shoulders
- exhausted or overwhelmed
- a loss or increase in appetite
- upset
- difficulty sleeping

Stress can make you have bad thoughts. It can make you feel sad inside, and that everything is too hard.

### What can cause stress?

You may feel stressed because:

- you are not able to work, or you have money problems
- you have been separated from your family
- you are living in a new and unfamiliar place

Experiencing ongoing persecution, racism, and conflict can also cause stress.

You may also feel stress because of work deadlines, an argument with your spouse, or looking after your children or parents.

### How can stress affect me?

Stress is not always a bad thing. The right amount of stress motivates us to take action to make things better.

When this is not possible, or when there is too much stress, it can be harmful for our health and happiness.

For example:

High amounts of stress can cause hair loss, weight gain or weight loss, and can increase our risk of heart disease over the longer term.

## How can I manage stress?

There are things you can do to look after yourself. Keeping yourself healthy can help you to cope with stress.

### Physical activity

Move your body and get your heart rate up every day. Try to spend at least 2.5 - 5 hours of physical activity per week.

Examples of physical activity include:

- Walking your kids to school
- Gardening
- Swimming
- Playing soccer
- Dancing
- Going to the gym

### Healthy eating

- Try to include vegetables in every meal
- Snack on fruit and nuts if you can
- Try not to eat food and drinks with too much sugar
- Try to limit how much junk food you eat

An example of a healthy meal could include fish, vegetables, and rice.

### Sleeping well

Try to sleep for 7.5 - 9 hours each night. Tips for a good night's sleep include:

- Going to bed and waking up at the same time each day
- Dimming lights in the evening
- Avoid using your phone, T.V, or computer 1 hour before bedtime

### Spending time with loved ones

- Show care and interest in each other's days
- Cook together, eat together, sing together, talk together
- Do fun activities together

### Relax

Using relaxation techniques like deep breathing exercises and meditation, and being in nature or the outdoors can help calm your mind and body.

## When do I need to get more help?

Talking with someone about your stress can be helpful. This can include talking to your partner, parents, friends, teachers, or community workers.

You can see your doctor for advice and support if you are feeling stressed most of the time and it's impacting upon your health, happiness, and ability to do your daily activities.



## How can I help someone?

If someone you know and care about is feeling stressed, there are ways that you can support them.

### Caring

- Ask if they would like to talk about what's on their mind and listen deeply to them. Listen more than speaking. Let them know that you care.
- If you are close with them, consider giving them a hug if that person appreciates hugs, or show your affection in a way that feels comfortable for you both.

### Advising

- Ask if they would like your advice on how to manage the stressful situation. If they do want your advice, share what you would do if you were in their situation, or what you have done.
- You can share helpful advice that you have received in the past or recommend that they speak with someone that you think may be able to help them.

### Assisting

- Ask how you can help make things easier for them during this time.
- You can offer to cook a meal for them, or look after their kids so that they have time to work on the problem or relax after a stressful day.

### Socialising

- Ask if they would like to do something nice with you, to take their mind off things.
- You can invite them over for a cup of tea or a meal or go for a walk or special outing together. You could play cards, billiards, go shopping, or make clothes together, anything that you would both enjoy.

Doing these things for yourself or someone that you care about can help you manage and relieve feelings of stress.

When you feel less alone, more supported and connected, you will be more able to cope with the challenges that you are facing.



## Where to get help

If English is not your first language, call the Translating and Interpreting Service

- Call 13 14 50
- Tell them what language you speak.
- They will call the services for you.



## If you are in crisis and need help now:

- Call 000 or go to your nearest hospital emergency department, or
- Call Lifeline on 13 11 14

For anxiety related concerns:

Beyond Blue – call 1300 22 46 36 to talk to a counsellor

Or visit [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

For kids or young people (aged 5 – 25 years) with behavioural or mental health issues:

Kids Helpline – call 1800 551 800

Or visit [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)

For young people (aged 12 – 25 years) with mental health concerns:

Headspace – call 1800 650 890

Or visit [www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)

For more information and translated resources:

Visit the Embrace Multicultural Mental Health website

[www.embracementalhealth.org.au/community/multilingual-information](http://www.embracementalhealth.org.au/community/multilingual-information)

### About this factsheet:

Created by the Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre, with the support of Community Champions from the Rohingya community in Melbourne, Women's Health in the South East, and Better Place Australia, as part of the CALD Community Engagement Project.

The CALD Community Engagement Project has been commissioned by Mental Health Australia's Embrace Multicultural Mental Health project with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care.

### Sources

<https://www.apa.org/topics/stress/>  
<https://www.apa.org/topics/stress/body>  
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/basics/stress-basics/hlv-20049495>  
<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/so-stressed-out-fact-sheet>  
<https://www.dhi.health.nsw.gov.au/transcultural-mental-health-centre-tmhc/resources/in-your-language/english>  
<https://www.verywellmind.com/stress-and-social-support-research-3144460>  
<https://www.verywellmind.com/stress-and-health-3145086>  
<https://www.verywellmind.com/tips-to-reduce-stress-3145195>  
<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/healthy-diet>  
<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/physical-activity>  
<https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/stress>