

STRESS MANAGEMENT FACT SHEET

Stress is not just an inconvenience, it can become a serious health concern.

Chronic high stress is associated with increased risk of Cardiovascular disease, Hypertension, chronic fatigue and infections.

Did you know that:

- Stress is the leading cause of visits to General Practitioners each year - up to 70% of cases.
- Controllable lifestyle factors such as diet, exercise, sleep and time management have a significant effect on stress levels.
- Alcohol is a common but highly ineffective stress management tool. Whilst the consumption of Alcohol may make you feel more relaxed, it can cause sleep disturbances, preventing the good quality sleep needed for effective rest and relaxation.
- Your physical environment can help or hinder stress management. Is your workstation set up correctly for your body size? Can you maintain a good posture? Is the lighting appropriate? What about noise levels? Reducing physical stress can help to reduce overall stress.
- Participating in “passive” recreation such as watching television is not as effective at reducing stress as “active” recreation such as taking a walk on the beach or enjoying a game of squash.
- Many factors that contribute to stress are outside of your control, but ensuring that you are doing everything you can to maintain a healthy body and mind, will maximise your ability to cope.

The Symptoms of Stress

- **Physical:** Fatigue, headaches, muscle tension or stiffness, heart palpitations, chest pain, trembling, shaking.
- **Mental:** Reduced ability to concentrate, increased anger, irritability, frustration, fear and/or depression
- **Behaviour:** Increased fidgeting, smoking, drinking or drug use, increased violent behaviour, yelling or swearing.

Tips for Managing Stress

- **Manage your time.** Learn to say “no” more often
- **Eat a balanced, nutritious diet**
- **Get at least 30mins of exercise each day**
- **Allow adequate time for sleep each night**
- **Ensure you have a distinct ‘split’ between home time and work time.**
- **Spend some time in active recreation, such as walking, reading, taking the kids to the park, playing beach cricket etc. to help unwind.**
- **Work on a “positive psychology” - you choose how you respond to external stressors.**
- **Avoid alcohol, drugs and stimulants such as Caffeine.**

Sources: Better Health Channel www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au, SANE Australia www.sane.org.au