

## Causes of stress

Stress is defined by the Health & Safety Executive as the 'adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them'. This makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be a positive state, if managed correctly, and stress, which can be detrimental to health.

If pressure is managed correctly it can lead to improved motivation, performance and increased job satisfaction. Stress, which is a negative state, results when the pressure becomes too great for the individual to deal with.

Stress is not an illness, but a term used to describe a state where people undergo emotional, behavioural and mental changes in response to excessive pressure. However, if stress becomes excessive and prolonged, this can lead to mental and physical illnesses.

Some long term ill health conditions can include:

<b>Heart and Circulation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Heart disease</li><li>• Heart attack</li><li>• Stroke</li><li>• Hypertension</li></ul>	<b>Mental Health</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chronic anxiety</li><li>• Depression</li><li>• Mental breakdown</li><li>• Alcohol/substance misuse</li><li>• Social isolation</li></ul>
<b>Digestion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Diarrhoea/Vomiting</li><li>• Peptic ulcers</li></ul>	<b>Immune System</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lowered resistance to infections</li><li>• Chronic asthma</li><li>• Chronic dermatitis</li></ul>

The stage at which pressure becomes stress will vary from person to person. We all have different tolerance levels and people will also be affected by non-work pressures, which may lead them to react adversely to work pressures sooner.

Some of the most common causes of work related stress are as follows:

- Dealing with clients or the public
- Business change/Reviews
- Poor working conditions
- Threats of violence, harassment or bullying
- Lack of flexibility
- Lack of control over work
- Too demanding a job or too high a workload
- Monotonous or boring work
- Lack of training
- Excessive hours and shift work
- Working in isolation

- Working relationships
- Unreasonable expectations

Some of the most common causes of stress outside of work are as follows:

- Death (of a loved one)
- Divorce or separation from a partner
- Changes in your health or that of a family member or close friend
- Childcare
- Caring for other dependents, such as elderly relatives
- Change in financial state, or debt or money worries
- Lack of friends or support
- Difficulties with neighbours
- Living with someone with an alcohol, drug problem or other addiction
- (If studying) a deadline for coursework, exam results or trying to balance work and study
- Poor living environment

The above lists are not exhaustive.