

# Health & Wellbeing

## January – Workplace stress



Most jobs involve some degree of stress, and this can affect people at all levels within an organisation, including frontline employees, managers and senior leaders.

Some stress is reasonable, but it becomes an issue when it is excessive and ongoing. There are some strategies everyone can adopt to manage and reduce their own stress levels, as well as find a positive work-life balance.

### ***What is workplace stress?***

Workplace stress can occur when there is a mismatch between the requirements of the role, your capabilities and resources and supports available.

Everyone knows what stress feels like and we've probably all experienced it at some stage – at home, school or work, or while getting outside our comfort zone, but while this stress is normal, if it is ongoing, it can become a problem.



### ***Signs of work stress***

Stress is a normal response to the demands of work. It can be beneficial in short bursts, helping you stay alert and perform at your best.

However, prolonged or excessive job stress can be damaging to your mental health. Stress can contribute to the development of anxiety and/or depression, and may cause an existing condition to worsen.

As well as affecting your relationships and life outside work, stress can increase your risk of injury, fatigue and burnout.

***Physical signs of stress:***

- chest pain or a pounding heart
- fatigue
- reduced interest in sex
- nausea, diarrhoea or constipation
- getting colds more often
- muscle tension, pains and headaches
- episodes of fast, shallow breathing and excessive sweating
- loss or change of appetite
- sleeping problems

***Non-physical signs of stress:***

- feeling overwhelmed or frustrated
- feeling guilty or unhappy
- being irritable
- losing confidence and being indecisive
- thinking negatively
- having racing thoughts
- memory problems
- excessive worrying

***Taking care of your mental health***

Everyone is different, with different roles – at home and at work – and there is no single best approach to staying mentally well, but there are several things you can do every day to improve your wellbeing.

- Go for a walk or bike ride
- Go swimming
- Do Yoga/Tai Chi
- Get good quality sleep
- Read a book or magazine
- Do a crossword/Sudoku
- Cook something new
- Listen to music/the radio
- Play in the backyard with your children or pets
- Do some gardening

- Have a bubble bath
- Get a massage

### ***Strategies for managing your work role***

- Limit working extra hours
- Schedule meetings during core work hours
- Take regular breaks
- Try not to take work home
- Take your holiday leave
- Set realistic deadlines and deliver on time
- It's OK to say “no”
- Have a technology switch-off
- Flexible working arrangements

### ***For more information:***

Heads Up is all about giving individuals and businesses the tools to create more mentally healthy workplaces.

Developed by the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance and beyondblue, Heads Up calls on business leaders to make a commitment and start taking action in their workplaces. It also encourages everyone in the workplace to play their part in creating a mentally healthy working environment, take care of their own mental health, and look out for their colleagues.

This website provides a wide range of resources, information and advice for individuals and organisations – all of which are designed to offer simple, practical and, importantly, achievable guidance.

<https://www.headsup.org.au/home>

