

STRESS

We all have stress sometimes. What causes stress for you may not be stressful for someone else. Sometimes stress is helpful – it can encourage you to meet a deadline or get things done. But long-term stress can increase the risk of diseases like depression, heart disease and a variety of other problems. A stress-related illness called post-traumatic stress disorder develops after an event like war, physical assault, or a natural disaster. If you have chronic stress, the best way to deal with it is to take care of the underlying problem.

Stress management can be complicated and confusing because there are different types of stress: acute stress, episodic acute stress, and chronic stress. Each with its own characteristics, symptoms, duration, and treatment approaches.

ACUTE STRESS

Acute stress is the most common form of stress. It comes from demands and pressures of the recent past and anticipated demands and pressures of the near future.

Fortunately, acute stress symptoms are recognized by most people.

Because it is short term, acute stress doesn't have enough time to do the extensive damage associated with long-term stress. The most common symptoms are:

- Emotional distress—a combination of anger or irritability, anxiety, and depression, the three stress emotions.
- Muscular problems including tension headache, back pain, jaw pain, and the muscular tensions that lead to pulled muscles and tendon and ligament problems.
- Stomach, gut and bowel problems such as heartburn, acid stomach, flatulence, diarrhea, constipation, and irritable bowel syndrome.
- Rapid heartbeat, sweaty palms, heart palpitations, dizziness, migraine headaches, cold hands or feet, shortness of breath, and chest pain.

EPISODIC ACUTE STRESS

There are those, however, who suffer acute stress frequently. They're always in a rush, but always late. If something can go wrong, it does. They seem perpetually in the clutches of acute stress.

CHRONIC STRESS

It's the stress of unrelenting demands and pressures for seemingly interminable periods of time.

Some chronic stresses stem from traumatic, early childhood experiences that become internalized and remain forever painful and present.

The worst aspect of chronic stress is that people get used to it. They forget it's there.

