

## Stress Warning Signs 11-3.03-K

IDENTIFY the warning signs of stress, as presented in the E-PME study guide

### ***Warning Signs of Stress***

Stress is the collection of physical and emotional responses to any situation that disrupts a person's equilibrium. Your body's initial response to stress is a chemical one. Under stressful situations, glands in your body produce chemicals that travel throughout your body preparing you to meet the challenge.

As the result of this automatic response, your:

- Heart rate increases
- Breathing speeds up
- Muscles become tense
- Blood flow increases in your large muscles
- Blood platelets thicken
- Pupils dilate
- Digestion slows

If you do not stabilize the responses that your body produces to meet stressful challenges, the rate of physical wear and tear is increased, and may eventually result in a stress-related disease or disorder.

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### ***Stress-Related Disease***

Uncontrolled stress can show up as any number of physical ailments. Some of these include:

- Muscle and skeletal disorders: back pain, tension headaches
  - Cardiovascular disorders: high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, or irregular heartbeat
  - Respiratory disorders: bronchial asthma, aggravated response to allergies
  - Skin disorders: rashes, boils, or hives
  - Sexual disorders: impotence, irregular menstrual cycle, or loss of sex drive
  - Gastrointestinal disorders: indigestion, ulcers, or an inflamed colon
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### ***Caught Up in Stress?***

Stress behavior is one way of responding to daily stressors, particularly those involving threat, challenge, and issues of control. In general, stress behavior may have some short-term benefits, but more often than not, it is not efficient and undermines your health over the long run.

You may be trapped in stress behavior if you:

- Continually finish other people's sentences
  - Tend to speak very rapidly or in half-sentences
  - Always move, walk, and eat rapidly
  - Frequently feel impatient with how slowly things move
  - Often become furious when you have to wait in a long line or to be seated in a restaurant
  - Frequently try to do more than one task at the same time
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### ***Common Causes of Stress***

The first step in controlling stress is to recognize what causes it. The events that trigger our automatic stress responses are called stressors. Stressors can be:

- Environmental – Include traffic, noise, crowds, lack of privacy, long periods of unfavorable weather, and toxic odors
- Work-related – Include work deadlines and other time pressures, work overload, confusion over assignments or priorities, unexpected changes or reassignments, promotion, and interpersonal conflicts
- Personal life – Include dealing with injury or illness, struggling with finances, family changes (separation; divorce; new-born, adopted, or step children; teenagers, death) and housing changes (home buying, moving)
- Self-imposed – Include setting unreasonable goals and pushing too hard, too far, and too fast. Sometimes, self-imposed stressors can be the greatest of all.

However, just because something has the potential to cause stress, doesn't mean it has to cause stress in your life. We must all learn to manage our stressors. Some stress is essential to a challenging, productive life. Stress becomes a problem when it occurs too often, is too intense, or lasts too long.

There are many ways to manage stressors. It is important to:

- Take care of your health
  - Train yourself to relax
  - Minimize stressful situations
  - Change negative ways of thinking to positive ones
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