



## S.O.S. signs of stress

Stress itself is neither good nor bad. Most people think of stress as negative – physical, emotional, mental strain. Sometimes, stress can be positive too. Stress and its symptoms are common problems.

### Stress involves change

Stress involves change. It is a fact of life. Stress is everyday happenings such as caring for children, going to school, dating, and getting along with family, friends and co-workers. Even a good change, such as getting a new job, can cause stress.

Stress is pressure from the outside which makes tension on the inside. Your mind and body go into high gear when you feel stress. Someone may tell you, “You don’t have any big problems – you shouldn’t feel under stress.” But if you feel under stress, you are. Stress – as with any feeling – is personal. Everyone experiences stress in his or her own way.

### How does stress feel to you?

Physical symptoms – such as loss of appetite, overeating, frequent headaches, upset stomach, etc. – are signs of stress. Some feelings can be signs, too. Do you have any of the signs listed below? If so, find out how you can better cope with stress.

#### Physical

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Increased heartbeat        | <input type="checkbox"/> Vomiting or diarrhea |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sweaty palms               | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty sleeping  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Frequent headaches         | <input type="checkbox"/> Trouble breathing    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tight neck or back muscles | <input type="checkbox"/> Nervous laughter     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trembling or twitching     | <input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping too much    |

#### Emotional

- |                                       |  |                                     |
|---------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Angry        | <input type="checkbox"/> Frustrated      | <input type="checkbox"/> Nightmares |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Apathetic    | <input type="checkbox"/> Worried         | <input type="checkbox"/> Overworked |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bored        | <input type="checkbox"/> Irritable       | <input type="checkbox"/> Panic      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crying Often | <input type="checkbox"/> Jealous         | <input type="checkbox"/> Pressure   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Depressed    | <input type="checkbox"/> Low self-esteem | <input type="checkbox"/> Restless   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flustered    | <input type="checkbox"/> Nervous         | <input type="checkbox"/> Tense      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tired        | <input type="checkbox"/> Uptight         | <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn  |

#### Mental

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Forgetful                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of concentration         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease/increase of fantasies | <input type="checkbox"/> Less creativity               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less productive often          | <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking about the past often |

#### Behavioral

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Increased alcohol or drug use | <input type="checkbox"/> Increased smoking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Careless driving              | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressiveness    |

### Not always aware of stress

Strangely, you are not always aware that you are under stress. Sometimes you do not see the habits attitudes and signs that can warn you because they are so familiar.

Stress can change the way you think, feel and act. And stress can make you feel bad about yourself. While the effects vary, how you cope with stress can cause problems with your family.

That’s why knowing the S.O.S. – signs of stress – is so important. How you handle stress is vital to your well-being and to the people around you. Recognizing the signs is a real help in learning to cope.

### If you need help

Don’t let stress get you down. An optimistic attitude is helpful in getting over rough spots. Understand S.O.S. – signs of stress. Talk over your situation with a friend, family member or clergy.

For help in an emergency, call Genesee Health System at (810) 257-3740, or toll free at (877) 346-3648, where a counselor is available 24 hours a day. For non-emergency services, call the Access Center at (810) 257-3742.

Other Genesee Health System handouts include: *The art of stress reduction*, *Codependency*, *Stress in the workplace*, *10 stress-busters for families* and *What is good mental health?* ©

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