

Stress at work

Information for members

Work-related stress is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures placed on them at work. A new 'resilience' industry blames the worker instead of tackling the causes of stress. **Stress is the biggest cause of work-related illness and employers need to focus on preventing it.** Stress can cause serious long-term effects to both physical and mental health.

HOW STRESS AFFECTS THE BODY

Skin

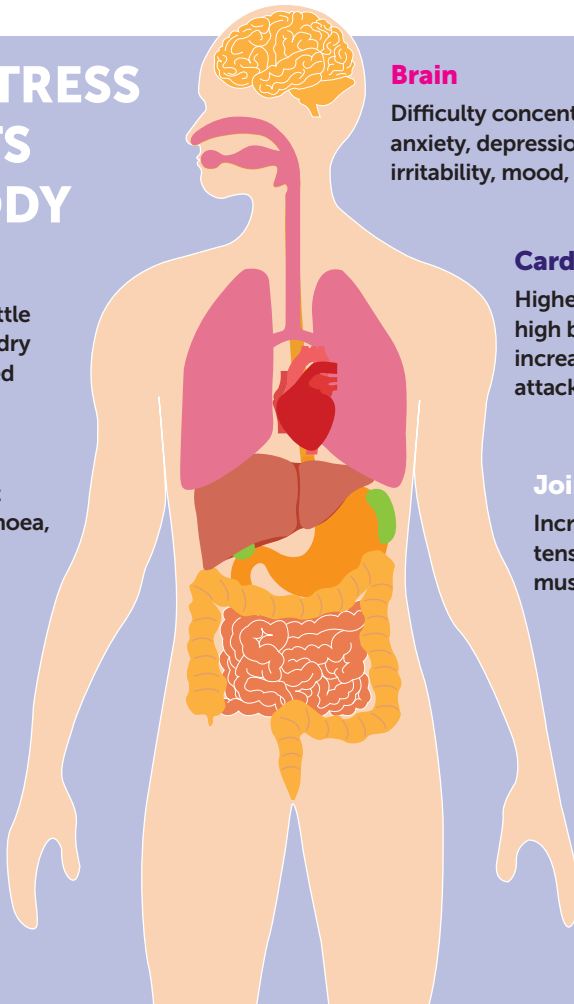
Hair loss, dull/brittle hair, brittle nails, dry skin, acne, delayed tissue repair

Gut

Reduced nutrient absorption, diarrhoea, constipation, indigestion, bloating, pain and discomfort

Reproductive system

Decrease in hormone production, decreased libido, increased PMS symptoms



Brain

Difficulty concentrating, anxiety, depression, irritability, mood, mind fog

Cardiovascular

Higher cholesterol, high blood pressure, increased risk of heart attack and stroke

Joints and muscles

Increased inflammation, tensions, aches and pains, muscle tightness

Immune system

Decreased immune function, lowered immune defenses, increased risk of illness, increase in recovery time

What causes work-related stress?

The causes of work-related stress are often a combination of how you are treated by your employer and managers; the way your work is managed and excessive demands placed upon you at work.

Risk assessments

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 the employer has a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees. By law employers are required to conduct risk assessments (RAs) to identify hazards and evaluate the risks they pose. The risk assessment should prioritise collective measures and a coherent prevention policy should be developed.

A stress risk assessment should cover six areas:

- **Demands** – workloads, work patterns, the working environment
- **Control** – how much say you have in doing your job
- **Support** – resources, line management and colleagues
- **Relationships** – promoting positive working to avoid conflict
- **Role** – understanding of your role
- **Change** – how organisational change is managed and communicated.

For further information: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/>

I am suffering from work-related stress, what should I do?

Tell your manager Ask for the document outlining the risks identified by the RA and the measures taken to protect you. Ask for it to be reviewed.

Tell your trade union rep what is causing you stress All three Cardiff University trade unions (UCU, Unite, Unison) are committed to tackling workplace stress and we will be conducting regular workplace inspections.

Union contacts and further information

UCU Email: ucu@cardiff.ac.uk Web: <https://www.cardiffucu.org.uk/what-we-do/active-working-groups/workload-campaign>

UNITE Email: unite@cardiff.ac.uk
Web: <https://cardiffuniversityunitetheunion.weebly.com>

UNISON Email: unison@cardiff.ac.uk Web: <https://cardiffuniversity.unison.site>

This leaflet has been adapted from the Hazards Campaign website:

<https://www.hazardscampaign.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/distress.pdf>

Not a UCU member?

Join today at: join.ucu.org.uk



UCU