

Guidance on addressing work-related stress

Stress is not a specific medical condition, but a term used to describe the physiological impacts experienced by an individual responding or reacting to a situation or circumstances they are experiencing.

It occurs when the brain detects sensory changes or behaviours which may have previously been linked to negative experience. This is also known as a 'stressor'.

People experience stress for a number of different reasons. If stress is having an effect on your day to day life in a negative way or for a prolonged amount of time this can cause both physical and mental harm.

Common symptoms of stress

Physical

- Chest pain
- Increased heart rate
- Headaches or dizziness
- Fatigue or tiredness
- Muscle tension or pain
- Stomach problems
- Changes to menstruation cycles
- Reduced immune system.

Behavioural

- Struggling to concentrate
- Difficulty with making decisions
- Disrupted sleep patterns
- Changes in diet or eating habits
- Changes effecting relationships.

Emotional

- Tearful and upset
- Constantly worrying or feelings of dread
- Anxious or overwhelmed
- Irritable and / or impatient
- Depressed or lacking motivation.

6 main work related stressors

Demand - This includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment.

Control - This relates to how much say the person has in the way they do their work.

Support - This includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources and employee receives from the organisation, line management and colleagues.

Relationships - This includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

Role - This relates to whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles.

Change - This relates to how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

What should my employer be doing about work-related stress?

Employers have a moral and legal duty to ensure that they protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees. Employers are required to identify the risks to the health and safety of their employees and others who may be affected by the organisation. If an employer has identified any risks and hazards, they must then put in place practical measures needed to avoid or reduce and control them.

What can I do about work-related stress?

1 - Seek medical advice

2 - Report any stress related symptoms or sickness absence via your employer's health and safety accident / incident reporting process

3 - After reporting to your employer you can request an individual stress risk assessment.

4 - Contact your PDA Workplace Representative

Guidance for those with management responsibilities

Those with management responsibilities may feel a sense responsibility for the stress their teams are experiencing may feel that the burden 'sits with them', whilst having little power or access to resource to help resolve it. Below are some steps that may provide some help and guidance.

1 - Remember the four step above on what you can do about work-related stress. It may have a negative impact on your team if you do not take steps to protect yourself first.

2 - If you suspect a member is experiencing stress encourage them to talk about it. You can encourage them to seek medical advice, support them to complete an accident report, and reassure and work with them to complete a stress risk assessment.

3 - Gather more information about how widespread the issues are. You can consider using a team risk assessment to help you with this. Raise the issues with your manager and seek support and what resources can be used to resolve the issues.

4 - Contact your PDA Workplace Representative who may be able to raise the identified issues at local management or health and safety meetings. You may also be able to help your rep/s with any research that is needed.

If you are experiencing stress at work you can [contact the PDA Member Support Centre](#). You can also contact [Pharmacist Support](#), the profession's independent charity supporting pharmacists and their families, pharmacy students, and former pharmacists in Great Britain or the [Pharmacist Advice and Support Service \(PASS\)](#) in Northern Ireland.