

It's Time...

# TO ADDRESS STRESS



## Struggling with your workload? Feeling stressed? You are not alone.

In October 2021, the Labour Force Survey (LFS) reported that stress, depression, or anxiety accounted for 50% of all work-related ill health, and, worryingly, health professionals have the highest rates of stress across the UK. Member responses to the PDA's recent Stress and Wellbeing survey only highlighted the ever increasing pressures that pharmacists are facing at work. The PDA recognises that members need support around this issue and, crucially, what can be done to address it.

## What is work-related stress?

Work-related stress is defined by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as: 'a harmful reaction people have to undue pressure and demands placed on them at work'.

## What are the causes of stress?

Causes include:

- excessive workloads
- long working hours
- inadequate breaks
- unrealistic/unattainable targets
- lack of control over working life
- understaffing
- restructuring/organisational change
- harassment and violence in the workplace

## What can I do to address work-related stress?

First, raise the issue rather than suffer in silence. Left unaddressed, work-related stress can lead to a loss of confidence, ill-health and absence from work.

The PDA service centre is available to advise you. They are likely to question you, so have a written schedule that details your workload and illustrates why it is excessive. Have an idea of what reasonable adjustments would make your workload more manageable

Talk to your PDA rep if you have one. The rep will be able to take details and help you raise it with management. If you do not have a rep, then you may wish to become one.

[Become a PDA rep | The Pharmacists' Defence Association \(the-pda.org\)](https://www.the-pda.org)

## Signs of Stress

Stress can have manifest itself in many ways. The NHS identify these as some of the most common;

### Physical Symptoms

- headaches or dizziness
- muscle tension or pain
- stomach problems
- chest pain or a faster heartbeat
- sexual problems

### Mental Symptoms

- difficulty concentrating
- struggling to make decisions
- feeling overwhelmed
- constantly worrying
- being forgetful

### Changes in Behaviour

- being irritable and snappy
- sleeping too much or too little
- eating too much or too little
- avoiding certain places or people
- drinking or smoking more

## Stress and You

If you are experiencing symptoms of stress, please see your GP. The charity Pharmacist Support also provide a wide range of support services for pharmacists and their families which relate to wellbeing and mental health. [www.pharmacistsupport.org](http://www.pharmacistsupport.org). In Northern Ireland, pharmacists can use PASS for support. [Who We Are – Pharmacy Forum NI \(pfni.org.uk\)](http://Who We Are – Pharmacy Forum NI (pfni.org.uk))

Your employer owes you a legal 'duty of care' and, mindful of this, should do all it reasonably can to reduce work-related stress.

Check your workplace's policy. Does it outline who is responsible for managing stress in your workplace and the methods they can use? Does it make reference to consultation with union reps and employees on matters that may increase stress levels, such as excessive workloads and restructuring? Where possible, quote from the policy to help support your case.

What if there is no policy? The absence of a policy does not alter the fact that your employer owes you a 'duty of care' (Health and Safety at Work, Act 1974). This includes protecting staff from stress. Similarly, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regs 1999 require employers to carry out a risk assessment of their workplaces and activities with a view to reducing any risks.

## Stress Risk Assessments

The HSE advises employers that the risk-assessment process should include looking at the Management Standards of the organisation. These standards include six key risk factors that are the root causes of much occupational stress. They are:

### **The demands of your job.**

These should be reasonable, realistic and achievable, and match your skills and abilities.

### **What control you have over your work.**

You should (a) have input into the pace of your work, (b) have a say about when breaks are taken and (c) be encouraged to use existing skills and develop new ones.

### **The support you receive from managers/ colleagues.**

Staff should know what support is available, how to access it and know they can rely on constructive feedback.

### **Your relationships at work.**

Employers should promote positive behaviours between colleagues and agree policies and procedures to prevent and resolve any problems.

### **Your role in the organisation.**

Employers should ensure that the requirements placed on staff are clear and consistent with the job.

### **How change is managed.**

Employers should engage with staff when undergoing change. In doing so, they should ensure that (a) the reasons for the change are given in a timely manner, (b) there is meaningful and adequate consultation, (c) that staff are aware of the timetable for change and the possible impact it will have on their jobs, and (d) know what support will be provided.

## Stronger Together

Raising concerns by yourself can be daunting. Workload-related stress seldom occurs in a vacuum and your colleagues may well share your concerns. So, where possible, raise them collectively, preferably via your PDA workplace rep. If you do not currently have a PDA rep, you could become one.

**It's Time...**

**TO JOIN TODAY**

