



# Stress



## What is stress?

Stress is a natural human response to pressure when faced with challenging and sometimes dangerous situations. When you feel threatened, your nervous system responds by releasing a flood of stress hormones which prepares the body for action.

That pressure is not only about what's happening around us, but also about demands we place on ourselves.

## Facts

- Nearly one in three Aboriginal adults have experienced high levels of psychological distress, more than twice the level for non-Indigenous Australians.
- The high levels of psychological distress, which included feelings of depression and anxiety, were reported by three out of ten Aboriginal adults.
- Levels were high among victims of violence (46%), and for those removed from their natural families (39%).

## Signs of stress

- ! Heart beats faster
- ! Rapid breathing
- ! Trouble sleeping
- ! Eating habits change
- ! Lack of concentration
- ! Restlessness
- ! Upset stomach
- ! Not coping
- ! Feeling exhausted



# Stress

## What causes stress?

- ✓ A traumatic event  
- such as the death of a loved one
- ✓ New or chronic illness or disability
- ✓ New responsibilities
- ✓ Relationships
- ✓ Sexual, physical or emotional abuse
- ✓ Problems at school or work
- ✓ Exams
- ✓ Peer pressure, being bullied
- ✓ Moving to a new place
- ✓ Unrealistic expectations placed on you by yourself, a friend, your family or culture

**Everyone thinks and feels differently about things, so stress affects people differently.**

## For more information

Contact your local Aboriginal Medical Service or Health worker. Aboriginal Chronic Care workers are located in NSW Health Services and some Aboriginal Medical Services.

PDF's can be downloaded and printed from Chronic Care for Aboriginal People Program:  
[www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au/networks/ccap](http://www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au/networks/ccap)

Email: [ACI-CCAP@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ACI-CCAP@health.nsw.gov.au)

Adapted with permission from Daruk AMS, Mt Druitt  
© NSW Ministry of Health 2004

## What can I do to manage stress?

- > Be aware – monitor your levels of stress and ask whether they are helpful or getting you down.
- > Take stock – think about things in your life or pressures you place on yourself that maybe increasing your stress.
- > Take charge – deal with unhelpful sources of stress before they build up and become a bigger problem.
- > Make choices – look at areas in your life where you could manage your situation better or change the way you react.

### For example:

- > Take some deep breaths.
- > Talk to someone you trust.
- > Create a stress diary, write down when you feel stressed and why.
- > Get a health check with your doctor or health worker.
- > Eat a healthy, balanced diet and choose smaller portions and fewer kilojoules.
- > If you smoke, try and quit.
- > Limit alcohol and caffeine.
- > Make time for things you enjoy.

## Free services

- > **Get Healthy Service**  
[www.gethealthynsw.com.au](http://www.gethealthynsw.com.au)  
or call 1300 806 258
- > **NSW Health Make Healthy Normal**  
[www.makehealthynormal.nsw.gov.au](http://www.makehealthynormal.nsw.gov.au)



**ACI** NSW Agency  
for Clinical  
Innovation

