

HEALTH & WELLNESS GUIDE

# Stress & Your Health

A Comprehensive Guide to  
Understanding  
the Impact of Stress on Body and Mind

By NourisHer Health Coach



# What Is Stress?

Stress is the body's natural response to perceived threats or demands. When you face a challenge, your nervous system releases hormones like cortisol and adrenaline, preparing you to act. In small doses, this response sharpens focus and boosts performance. However, when stress becomes chronic — lasting weeks or months — it disrupts nearly every system in your body and mind, creating a cascade of symptoms that many people normalise without realising the root cause.



**Acute stress is short-lived and manageable — a deadline, a presentation.**

**Chronic stress lingers: financial worries, caregiving, unresolved conflict.**

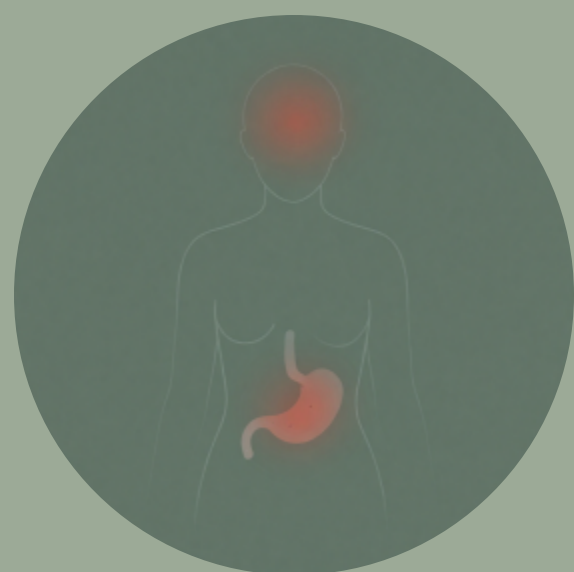
**The difference matters because your body was never designed to stay in survival mode.**

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Key takeaway: Short-term stress serves a protective function.  
Prolonged stress leads to systemic deterioration.

# The Physical Impact

Chronic stress keeps cortisol levels elevated. Over time, this hormonal imbalance triggers a chain reaction across your body's major systems:



Weakened immune system — frequent colds, slow healing

Elevated blood pressure & increased heart disease risk

Digestive issues — bloating, IBS flare-ups, inflammation

Muscle tension, headaches & chronic pain

Disrupted sleep — difficulty falling or staying asleep

Hormonal imbalances — irregular cycles, low energy

Weight gain, particularly around the midsection

Source: American Heart Association — chronic stress increases cardiovascular disease risk by up to 40%.

# The Mental Impact

Stress doesn't just live in the body. It reshapes how we think, feel, and connect with others. Over time, unmanaged stress erodes emotional resilience:



Persistent anxiety & racing thoughts

Brain fog — difficulty concentrating or making decisions

Emotional exhaustion & burnout

Withdrawal from relationships & social isolation

Low mood, irritability & emotional reactivity

Loss of motivation & sense of purpose

Negative self-talk & reduced self-worth

77% of people experience stress that affects their physical health regularly.

# Warning Signs of Chronic Stress

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Your body sends signals before burnout hits. Learn to recognise these red flags early — they are not weakness, they are wisdom:



Constant fatigue despite adequate sleep

Feeling overwhelmed by small tasks

Changes in appetite — eating too much or too little

Frequent illness or lingering colds

Difficulty switching off — always 'on'

Emotional numbness or sudden outbursts

Neglecting hobbies, friends & self-care

If you recognise 3 or more of these signs, it may be time to pause and reassess.



# Practical Strategies for Stress Management

Deep breathing exercises · Regular physical activity · Clear boundaries · Intentional rest periods

Implementing even one of these strategies consistently can significantly reduce your stress levels over time. Progress is not linear — be patient with yourself.

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