

# Stress and Your Health



## How you think and feel starts your body's stress response.

Stress doesn't come from the difficult or challenging situations you face, it comes from how you see them and what you feel about them (e.g., scared, anxious, worried, angry, sad).

## When you experience something that feels stressful for you, your body responds.

It doesn't matter if a stressful situation feels really frustrating or a little annoying, it will start your body's stress response.

## Stress can make you do things you regret.

Stress shuts down the decision making and thinking part of your brain (your cortex). When this happens, it's hard to take in and make sense of information and you may not do or act your best (e.g., forget things you know, act in ways you normally don't).

## Try to decrease stress when it happens.

Whenever you feel uncomfortable, you can start to decrease stress in that moment by taking in 5 or 6 slower and deeper than normal breaths.

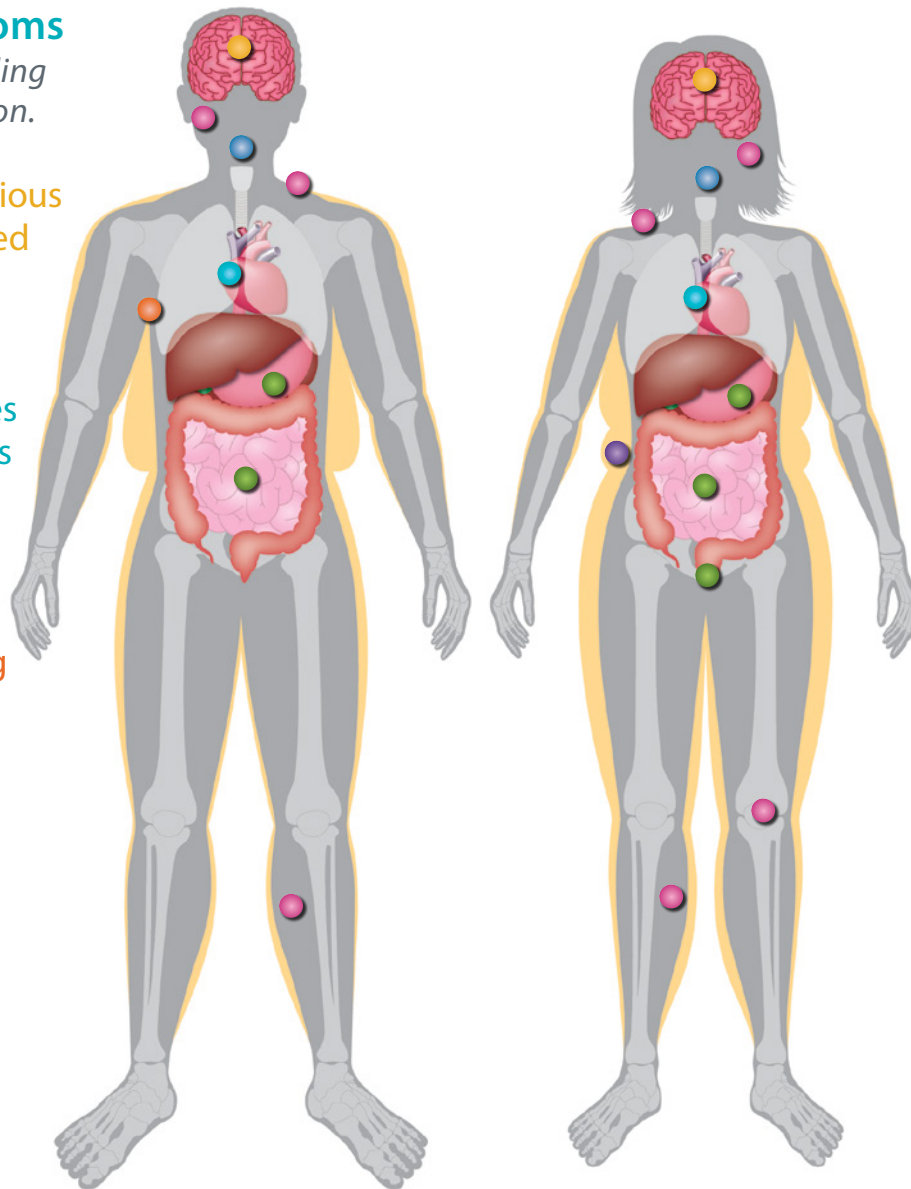
**Did you know?**  
Chronic stress lowers your immune system and makes it harder for your body to fight infections.

## How stress can affect your body:

### Short-term Symptoms

*When your body is dealing with a stressful situation.*

- Feel worried or anxious  
Dizzy or lightheaded
- Dry mouth
- Heart beats faster  
Blood pressure rises  
Breathing increases
- Stomach ache  
Feel butterflies in your stomach
- Increased sweating
- Muscles tense  
Jaw tightens



### Long-term Symptoms

*Long periods of unmanaged stress (chronic stress).*

- Trouble concentrating  
Memory problems  
Headaches  
Sleep issues
- Teeth grinding  
Tooth decay
- High blood pressure  
Increased heart rate  
Stroke
- Upset stomach  
Abdominal pain  
Digestive problems
- Weight gain  
Obesity
- Jaw tension  
Muscle aches  
Joint pain

Learning ways to manage your stress will improve your overall health and well-being.

For more information about stress, talk to your healthcare provider or go to:  
[www.myhealth.alberta.ca](http://www.myhealth.alberta.ca)  
(search for *Stress Management*)