

Stress

What is stress?

Stress is a natural response to a demand or threat in our environment and we all experience it. A certain level is needed as it helps you rise to the occasion and get things done. But long-term stress can affect your health and wellbeing.

Signs of too much stress include:

- ▶ headaches
- ▶ stomach/puku aches
- ▶ poor sleep
- ▶ feeling tired, anxious, irritable or angry
- ▶ lack of concentration
- ▶ needing to use coffee or sugar to keep going
- ▶ increased skin infections, mouth ulcers, colds, rashes or asthma.

Health conditions such as high blood pressure, obesity, diabetes, heart disease, anxiety and depression can result from ongoing stress. Therefore, it's important to learn to manage stress to keep physically and mentally healthy.

How can I deal with current stress?

- ▶ Include relaxing things in your day – listen to music, take photos, do some mindfulness meditation, have a bath, practice breathing exercises.
- ▶ Do some exercise.
- ▶ Get plenty of sleep.
- ▶ Eat healthily.
- ▶ Don't dwell on things that are worrying you, distract yourself with an activity, or by getting into nature.
- ▶ Talk to a friend or whānau member who understands.

How can I avoid long-term stress?

- ▶ Think about the sources of stress in your life and see what can be changed or stopped.
- ▶ Problem-solve and break down larger more stressful tasks into smaller steps.
- ▶ Consider that you might be trying to do too much in one day, be realistic about what you can achieve.
- ▶ Look at your lifestyle – is it healthy with respect to food, drink, sleep and exercise?
- ▶ Try to maintain some work/life balance.
- ▶ Make sure you do some of the things that are important to you and spend time with loved ones.

Try the step-by-step problem solving process on the next page.

