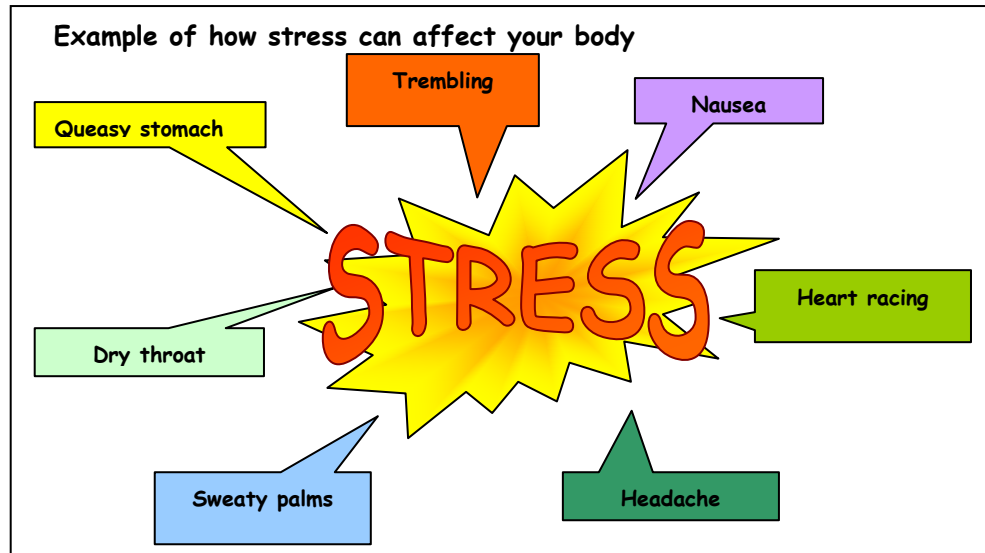


# STRESS

Everyone reacts to stress in a different way and awareness of the problem varies from person to person.

Reaction to stress can be divided into three parts:

## Physical changes



- Heart racing - the heart beats faster to pump blood to the muscles for action.
- Sweating - To allow heat loss, causing clammy hands and feet
- Circulation is directed away from non-vital organs and towards muscles for increased activity. This can cause:
  - a. Queasy stomach -It also affects the production of acid and the control of the stomach openings. May cause nausea, reflux, vomiting and, occasionally, chest pain
  - b. Bowel problems - slowing down digestion of food and give rise to irritable bowel type symptoms
- Increased tension in the muscle fibres - to be ready for sudden action. Can produce:
  - a. Tension around head, neck and shoulders
  - b. Trembling
  - c. Headaches
  - d. Twitchy muscles
- Increased breathing rate - to increase oxygen in case we need to react physically to a threat.

If we don't use the adrenalin generated for a physical response we are in effect taking in more oxygen than we need. Over breathing produces:

- light headedness
- dizziness blurred vision
- feeling faint
- tingling hands and feet
- pins and needles
- dry throat

### Emotional effects

Tense	Irritable
Fear	Dread
Argumentative	Frustrated
Afraid	Angry

### Cognitive effects

- Poor concentration
- Difficulties in making decisions
- Memory problems

This stress response is brought about by the release of adrenalin. It was very useful when we lived in a cave and faced by a tiger but modern stress takes more sophisticated forms such as: difficulty with close relationships, financial worries and facing loss.

In the past adrenalin would help us react to dangerous situations and would 'burn off' through activity (when we killed the tiger) so that the body could return to its resting state. Modern problems often don't have instant solutions and so the body can be in a continual state of arousal. This is complicated by sedentary lifestyles, and with having to take more rest periods in response to symptoms. This can mean that the effects of the stress reaction stay with us. It can become part of our daily lives without us noticing and can use precious reserves of energy and increases anxiety.

Worrying is a type of stress. You may have noticed times when your neck and shoulders feel knotted up. This is muscle pain brought about by prolonged tension. The changes may be quite small so it is important to learn to recognise them and learn how to manage them before they produce uncomfortable effects.

Relaxation is the opposite side of the coin to stress and helps us counteract the effects and restore energy.