



HERITAGE  
Lower Saint Lawrence  
Bas-Saint-Laurent

# Think

# Healthy!

Your Family's Health Newsletter

free

No. 15

Français au verso

## What is stress ?

“I am so stressed!”

How often have you heard someone say that? How many times have you felt stressed yourself? No matter who you are or how you live, the pressures of everyday life can have an impact on your well-being. Stress is a fact of life.

But what is stress? Is it always harmful, or can it also lead you forward on your life journey?

You could say there is “good” and “bad” stress. Good stress can be managed. It stimulates and helps you achieve balance in all the responsibilities of your life. You can handle good stress.

Bad stress may cause you to feel out of control. It can make you break out in a cold sweat. It can make your heart beat furiously. It scares you and makes you feel sick inside. Bad stress is dangerous. It can harm your health and happiness.

Everyone feels stress differently. What is stressful to you may not concern someone else because no two people respond exactly the same way to a situation.



Source: [heartandstroke.ca](http://heartandstroke.ca) [cmha.ca](http://cmha.ca)

**CHSSN**  
Community Health  
And Social Services Network  
Réseau communautaire de santé  
et de services sociaux

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# Test your stress index

## DO YOU FREQUENTLY:

YES/NO

Neglect your diet?	
Try to do everything yourself?	
Blow up easily?	
Seek unrealistic goals?	
Fail to see the humour in situations others find funny?	
Act rude?	
Make a “big deal” of everything?	
Look to other people to make things happen?	
Have difficulty making decisions?	
Complain you are disorganized?	
Avoid people whose ideas contradict your own?	
Bottle up everything inside?	
Avoid or neglect physical activity?	
Have few or no supportive relationships?	

YES/NO

Use sleeping pills or tranquilizers without consulting a doctor?	
Not get enough rest?	
Get angry when you are kept waiting?	
Ignore stress symptoms in your habits and attitudes?	
Put things off until later?	
Think there is only one right way to do something?	
Fail to include relaxation time in your day?	
Gossip?	
Impatiently try to race through your day?	
Spend a lot of time complaining about your past?	
Fail to get a break from noise and crowds?	

Score 1 for each “YES” answer.

Total your score \_\_\_\_\_

## What your score means

### 1-6:

You have few hassles, and generally lead a low stress life. That’s great! But, don’t spend so much energy avoiding problems that you shy away from challenges.

### 7-13:

You’ve got a handle on your life. Though you’re in good control, try to improve choices and habits that might still cause some unnecessary stress.

### 14-20:

Warning: You’re in the danger zone! Even now you’re probably suffering stress-related symptoms. Take time out every day to look at choices you’ve made and reflect on outcomes.

### above 20:

Red flag emergency! Stop. Re-think. Change your lifestyle. Improve your diet. Make physical activity a regular routine, and above all, try to find ways to relax. Is it running? Knitting? Spending time with your kids? Try to positively alter your attitudes.

## STRESS RESPONSE STAGES

Stressors can cause you to experience any or all of the following stages:

### STAGE 1: Mobilization of energy

Your body reacts to a sudden, frightening stressor such as a near-car accident–this is “primary stress”. Or, you can deliberately enter a stressful situation, such as the night before your wedding– this is “secondary stress”. In either case, the following symptoms may develop:

- your heart rate increases
- you breathe rapidly, in short gasps
- you experience a cold sweat
- you have “butterflies” in your stomach – indigestion or no appetite
- you feel dizzy or light-headed

### STAGE 2: Consumption energy

If you can’t get relief from Stage 1, your body will begin to release stored sugars and fats, consuming vital resources.

As a result, you may:

- feel driven and under pressure
- become exhausted to the point of fatigue
- overeat or have a poor diet
- experience anxiety or tension
- have difficulty concentrating
- suffer illnesses, such as colds and flu
- increase unhealthy habits, such as smoking, excessive alcohol or food consumption or increased coffee drinking

### STAGE 3: Exhaustion

If your stress remains unresolved, it can become chronic. Your body’s need for energy resources is greater than its ability to produce them. You could develop a serious illness such as:

- heart disease
- stroke
- high blood pressure
- mental illness (depression)

Or, you may experience symptoms such as:

- insomnia (difficulty sleeping)
- errors in judgement
- personality changes

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION



1-888-473-4636  
[www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca)



1-514-849-3291  
[www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)



### *Did you know?*

- All children, even very young children experience stress
- All children benefit from an increased ability to deal with stress and can learn ways to do this
- Research shows that up to 90% of illnesses are related to stress

### *Kids say their stress comes from many different things:*

- Change - moving to a different home or school, starting school for the first time
- Having too much to do. Kids need some quiet time.
- Feeling different from other kids or being teased or bullied
- Fighting or arguing among family members, not getting along well with brothers or sisters
- Having trouble with schoolwork
- Being yelled at by family, friends or teachers
- Family break-up
- Most of all, when they feel lonely and unloved...

### *Some Ways to Build a Less Stressful Home*

- Make sure your child gets exercise and time to play.
- Healthy food can help the body cope with stress more easily.
- Bedtime routines help kids relax at the end of the day.
- Sleep is important. A tired child gets stressed more easily.
- Morning routines get the day off to a good start.
- Learn to manage your stress.