



"Fatigue is defined as the increasing difficulty in performing mental and physical activities as a consequence of inadequate restorative sleep. It is a feeling of constant tiredness or weakness and can be physical, mental or a combination of both. Fatigue can affect anyone, and most adults will experience it at some point in their life - in fact, around 1.5 million Australians see their doctor about fatigue each year. Fatigue is a symptom, not a condition, and although sometimes described as tiredness, it is different to just feeling tired or sleepy. Everyone feels tired at some point, but this is usually resolved with a nap or a few nights of good sleep. Someone who is sleepy may also feel temporarily refreshed after exercising, whereas they may not if fatigue is the issue."

What Causes Fatigue?

There are many factors that can contribute to fatigue, including:

- **Sleep issues:** Including sleep loss, inadequate amounts of sleep (<7-8 hours), poor quality sleep or long periods of being awake (>17 hours).
- **Medical causes:** Unrelenting exhaustion may be a sign of an underlying illness, such as a thyroid disorder, heart disease or diabetes.
- **Lifestyle-related causes:** Alcohol, drugs, an inadequate diet or lack of regular exercise can lead to feelings of fatigue.
- **Emotional concerns:** Fatigue is a common symptom of mental health problems, such as depression and grief, and may be accompanied by other signs and symptoms, including irritability and lack of motivation.
- **Workplace-related causes:** Workplace stress or sustained mental or physical effort can lead to feelings of fatigue.

Fatigue can also be caused by a number of these factors working in combination.

Signs and Symptoms of Fatigue

Fatigue can cause a vast range of other physical, mental and emotional symptoms including:

- Chronic tiredness and sleepiness
- Blurred vision
- Difficulty keeping eyes open
- Headache
- Dizziness
- Poor concentration
- Irritability
- Impaired judgement
- Appetite loss

- Reduced attention span
- Low motivation
- Impaired immune system

Fatigue in the Workplace

Shift work and shifts with extended hours refer to any non-standard work schedule. The traditional 8-hour day worked between 7am and 6pm has changed dramatically and many people now regularly work evening and night shifts and/or extended hours. Studies show that shift work and shifts with extended hours can have significant adverse effects on health, workplace accident rates, absenteeism and a worker's personal life.

"Being awake for 17 hours is the equivalent of having a blood alcohol level of 0.05"

Being awake for 20 hours is the equivalent of having a blood alcohol level of 0.1."

Health Effects of Shift Work

Partial sleep deprivation is the main problem that affects the health of shift workers. Night work disturbs the circadian rhythm in the human body. This is an internal body clock that is synchronised to a 24 hour period. It regulates a number of physiological functions such as temperature, hormone secretion, heart rate, blood pressure, respiration, digestion and mental alertness. Shift workers can have health problems because this internal clock is disturbed. Researchers have found several negative health effects in shift workers and workers on extended hours.

Health Effects of Long-Term Sleep Deprivation

- Sleep disorders and increased fatigue
- Diabetes

- Heart disease and high blood pressure
- Digestion disorders
- Mental health issues (depression and anxiety)
- Medication side effects
- Decreased fertility
- Weight gain and obesity
- Immune system deficiency
- Memory loss and faulty brain function (balance, reflexes, motor skills)

Tips to Improve Sleep, Boost Energy and Fight Fatigue

Dietary Suggestions

- **Drink plenty of water:** A dehydrated body functions less efficiently. Aim for 6-8 glasses a day.
- **Be careful with caffeine:** One or two caffeinated drinks (like coffee and tea) per day boosts energy and mental alertness. However, heavy caffeine users (more than six drinks per day) are prone to anxiety, irritability and reduced performance. Avoid coffee after 4pm and also energy drinks, as they can leave you feeling worse once the sugar and caffeine wears off.
- **Eat breakfast:** Food boosts your metabolism and gives the body energy to burn. The brain relies on glucose for fuel, so choose carbohydrate-rich breakfast foods such as oats with fresh fruit or wholegrain bread.
- **Don't skip meals:** Going without food for too long allows blood sugar levels to dip. Try to eat regularly to maintain your energy levels throughout the day.
- **Have a healthy lunch:** Eat a combination of protein and carbohydrates for lunch, for example a tuna sandwich. Carbohydrates provide glucose for energy, and the amino acid tyrosine (found in proteins such as soy products, chicken, fish and almonds, as well as avocados and bananas) allows the brain to synthesize the neurotransmitters dopamine and norepinephrine, which help keep your mind attentive and alert.
- **Don't overeat:** Large meals can drain your energy. Try eating six mini-meals to spread out your kilojoule intake more evenly. This will result in more constant blood sugar and insulin levels. You'll also find it easier to lose excess body fat if you eat this way.
- **Eat iron rich foods:** Women, in particular, are prone to iron-deficiency (anaemia). Make sure your diet includes iron rich foods such as lean red meat.

Lifestyle Suggestions

- **Don't smoke:** Cigarette smoke contains many harmful substances and there are many reasons why smokers typically have lower energy levels than non-smokers. For example, for the body to make energy it needs to combine glucose with oxygen, but the carbon monoxide in cigarette smoke reduces the amount of oxygen available in the blood.
- **Increase physical activity:** Physical activity boosts energy levels, while a sedentary lifestyle is a known cause of fatigue. A good bout of exercise also helps you sleep better at night.

- **Limit the time you sit down:** Reduce sedentary behaviours such as working at the computer and watching television. A brisk walk outside or even five (5) minutes stretching at your desk improves blood flow and boosts energy.
- **Seek treatment for substance abuse:** Excessive alcohol consumption or recreational drug use contributes to fatigue, and is unhealthy and potentially dangerous.
- **Workplace/Home issues:** Demanding jobs, conflicts at work or work and burnout are common causes of fatigue. Take steps to address any stressful issues during the day. A good place to start is to talk with your human resources officer, a friend, work colleague or GP.
- **Coping with the mid-afternoon energy slump:** Most people feel drowsy after lunch. This mid-afternoon drop in energy levels is linked to the brain's circadian rhythm and is 'hard wired' into the human body. Prevention may be impossible, but there are ways to reduce the severity of the slump. Incorporate as many fatigue fighting suggestions as you can into your lifestyle.

Sleep Suggestions

- **Get enough sleep:** Adults need about eight hours sleep per night. Make the necessary changes to ensure you get a better night's sleep.
 - *Get up at approximately the same time everyday*
 - *Avoid going to bed too early (affects the 'deep sleep') and allow yourself time to wind down*
 - *Avoid using electronic devices within 30 minutes of bedtime*
 - *Avoid vigorous exercise, drinking alcohol and smoking at least 2-4 hours before going to bed*
 - *Don't go to bed hungry or with a full bladder*
 - *Keep your bedroom quiet, dark, well ventilated and cool, and avoid overheating with clothing and blankets*
- **Learn how to relax:** A common cause of insomnia is fretting about problems while lying in bed. Experiment with different relaxation techniques until you find one or two that work for you.
- **Avoid sleeping pills:** Sleeping pills are not a long term solution because they don't address the causes of insomnia. Many people find that they feel worse the next day after taking sleeping pills.

Reach Out and Seek Additional Support

If you feel that you are feeling overwhelmed by the change and uncertainty, or if you feel that the stress and anxiety that you experience is becoming too much, reach out to your support networks; your GP, family, friends, Counsellor/Psychologist (through your EAP program).

CHG Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services are available at all of our sites (Mile End, Gillman and Elizabeth). We are now also offering EAP via video conference in addition to phone consults. Please contact eap@chg.net.au for more information or to book an appointment.

For more information:

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au (Better Health Channel)

www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/fatigue

www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au/fact-sheets

www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/get-immediate-support (1300 224 636)

www.lifeline.org.au/resources (Tool-kit Downloads)

11 March 2021

WORK LIFE BALANCE



There was a time when the boundaries between work and home were fairly clear. Today, however, work is likely to invade your personal life — and maintaining a work-life balance is no simple task.

This might be especially true if you're concerned about losing your job due to restructuring, layoffs or other factors. Technology that enables constant connection to work can eat into time at home. Work-life balance can be especially difficult for parents of young children. Still, work-life balance isn't out of reach; start by evaluating your relationship to work, then apply specific strategies to help you strike a healthier balance.

Consequences of a poor work life balance

It can be tempting to rack up hours at work, especially if you're trying to earn a promotion, manage an increasing workload, or simply keeping your head above water. If you're spending most of your time working, your home life will take a hit.

Consider these:

- **Fatigue.** When you're tired, your ability to work productively and think clearly might suffer, which could take a toll on your professional reputation or lead to dangerous or costly mistakes.
- **Poor health.** Stress is associated with adverse effects on the immune system and can worsen the symptoms you experience from any medical condition. Stress also puts you at risk of substance abuse.
- **Lost time with friends and loved ones.** If you're working too much, you might miss important family events or milestones. This can leave you feeling left out and might harm relationships with your loved ones. It's also difficult to nurture friendships if you're always working.
- **Increased expectations.** If you regularly work extra hours, you might be given more responsibility — which could lead to additional concerns and challenges.

Know when to seek professional help

Everyone needs help from time to time. If your life feels too chaotic to manage and you're spinning your wheels worrying about it, talk with a professional, such as a counselor or other mental health provider. If your employer offers an employee assistance program, take advantage of available services.

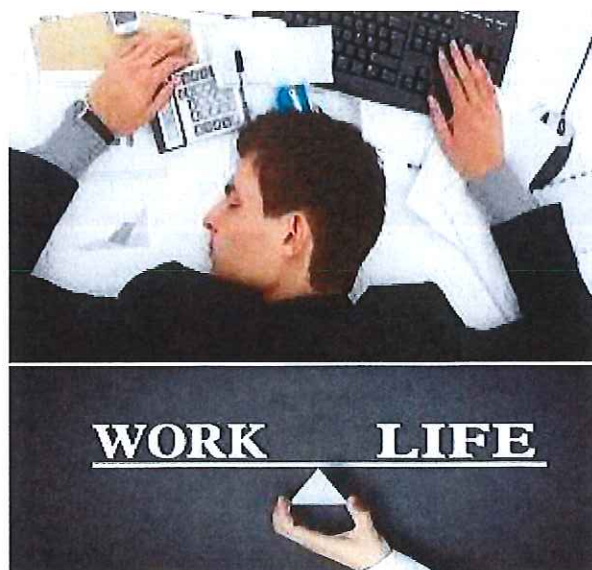
Remember, striking a healthy work-life balance isn't a one-shot deal. Creating work-life balance is a continuous process as your family, interests and work life change. Periodically examine your priorities and make changes, if necessary — to make sure you're keeping on track.



Australia ranks in the bottom third of OECD countries for Work-Life Balance.

Full-time employees are reportedly spending 30 minutes less on leisure and personal care than other OECD countries.

In 2016, 13% of employees regularly worked 50 hours or more per week.



Setting limits

As long as you're working, juggling the demands of career and personal life will probably be an ongoing challenge. But if you can learn both to set limits and look after yourself, you can achieve the work-life balance that's best for you. Consider these ideas:

- **Track your time.** Pay attention to your daily tasks, including work-related and personal activities. Decide what's necessary and what satisfies you the most.
- **Manage your time.** Cut or delegate activities you don't enjoy or can't handle — or share your concerns and possible solutions with your employer or others. Organise household tasks efficiently, such as running errands in batches or doing a load of laundry every day; don't save all the laundry for your day off. Do what needs to be done and let the rest go.
- **Make a list.** Put family events on a weekly calendar, and keep a daily to-do list at home and at work. Having a plan helps you maintain focus. When you don't have a plan, it's easy to be sucked into the plans and priorities of others.
- **Learn to say no.** Whether it's a co-worker asking you to spearhead an extra project or your child's teacher asking you to organise a class party, remember that it's OK to respectfully say no. When you quit accepting tasks out of guilt or a false sense of obligation, you'll have more time for activities that are meaningful to you.
- **Leave work at work.** With the technology to connect to anyone at any time from virtually anywhere, there might be no boundary between work and home — unless you create it. Make a conscious decision to separate work time from personal time.
- **Reduce email access.** Check emails no more than three times a day — late morning, early afternoon and late in the day. If you access email first thing in the morning, you tend to focus on and respond to other people's issues rather than being proactive about your own needs.
- **Take advantage of your options.** Ask your employer about flexi hours, a compressed workweek, job sharing, telecommuting or other scheduling flexibility. The more control you have over your hours, the less stressed you're likely to be.
- **Try to shorten commitments and minimise interruptions.** Most people can sustain a maximum level of concentration for no more than 90 minutes. After that, the ability to retain information decreases dramatically. When interrupted during a task, you need double or triple the time of the interruption to regain full concentration on your task.

Caring for yourself

A healthy lifestyle is essential to coping with stress and to achieving work-life balance. Try to:

Eat a healthy diet. The Mediterranean diet, which emphasizes fresh fruits, vegetables, lean protein and healthy fats, enhances the ability to retain knowledge as well as stamina and wellbeing.

Get enough sleep. Lack of sleep increases stress. It's also important to avoid using personal electronic devices, such as tablets, just before bedtime. The blue light emitted by these devices decreases your level of melatonin, the hormone associated with sleep.

Make time for fun and relaxation. Set aside time each day for an activity that you enjoy, such as practicing yoga or reading. Better yet, discover activities you can do with your partner, family or friends — such as hiking, dancing or taking cooking classes.

Volunteer. It's important not to over-schedule yourself, but research indicates that volunteering can contribute to a greater sense of work-life balance. Selective volunteering might lower your levels of burnout and stress and boost your emotional and social wellbeing.

Bolster your support system. At work, join forces with co-workers who can cover for you — and vice versa — when family conflicts arise. At home, enlist trusted friends and loved ones to pitch in with child care or household responsibilities when you need to work overtime or travel.



STRESS AT WORK



While some workplace stress is normal, excessive stress can interfere with your productivity and impact your physical and emotional health. Your ability to deal with it can mean the difference between success or failure. For workers everywhere, the economy may feel like an emotional roller coaster. Layoffs and budget cuts are common in the workplace, and the result is job insecurity, uncertainty and higher levels of stress for employees and employers alike. You can't control everything in your work environment, but that doesn't mean you're powerless - even when you're stuck in a difficult situation. Finding ways to manage workplace stress isn't about making huge changes or rethinking career ambitions, but rather about focusing on the one thing that's always within your control: **you**. Here are a few steps you can take to reduce your stress on the job.

Figure out what stresses you out

Keep a stress diary for a week. Record what events or people increased your stress level. Note how each situation made you feel, how you responded and what you wish were different. Then review your diary after several days. What is one stressor you think you can change? Maybe it's how you react to last minute deadlines or how you respond when a colleague is late with something. Make that stressor a priority - brainstorm ways it could be resolved differently, decide on a game plan for change and then implement it. If that tactic doesn't work, try another until you've found a strategy that works for you.



Prioritising and organising

To the extent you control your daily schedule, make your workload work for you. Time-management skills are vital to planning, prioritising and completing tasks. Set hourly or daily goals, but be realistic. If there's no way you will complete a project in two days, do not push yourself. If, in the end, you're left with some extra time after completing your project, consider it a few spare moments you can catch up on your emails or get ahead on your next task.

Don't be afraid to ask for help

It can be nerve-racking to ask your boss or a colleague for help, but if it keeps you from getting behind or making costly errors, it's absolutely worthwhile to muster up the courage and ask. They might have valuable insight or information that can help you do your job better and faster. In many cases, people will often respect you more for opening up and making your stress known.



Give yourself a break

There is a lot to be said for 15-minute breaks. When you allow yourself to walk away from your desk for a moment, you clear your brain, refresh your internal work batteries and reset your posture. Just don't reach for a cigarette or your fifth cup of coffee while you're taking a break. Nicotine acts similarly to stress on your body, keeping it in a tense state, and too much caffeine can make you jittery and then send your energy crashing. Instead, take a brisk walk around the office or outdoors to reinvigorate you.

Resist the technology out of hours

Make a conscious decision to turn the work phone off once you leave the office and to not check your emails until you arrive at work the next day. In today's digital world, it's easy to feel pressure to be available 24 hours a day, so establish some work-life boundaries for yourself. Although people have different preferences when it comes to how much they blend their work and home life, creating some clear boundaries between these realms can reduce the potential for work-life conflict and the stress that goes with it.



Don't be afraid of the word 'no'

People pleasing kills production. It can create a guilty inner demon who laughs at you for agreeing to stuff you know is a waste of time or is putting you under even more pressure. Do not fear 'the no'. It may seem like a powerfully intimidating two letter word, but for such a tiny word, 'no' is profoundly liberating. When you decide 'this does not warrant my immediate attention', or 'this is counterproductive', you embrace your intuition. If at any point you've already thought about saying 'no' to something, there's probably merit for consideration. By clearly articulating your needs, challenges, or deadlines to those requesting something from you, you can respectfully decline their request. Say 'no' more often when you really can't manage something or if it is something you should not be doing.



Break bad habits

Perfectionism, procrastination and negative thinking are all bad habits that you should try to avoid to reduce your workplace stress. No project, situation, or decision is ever perfect, so trying to attain perfection on everything will simply add unnecessary stress to your day. Aim to do your best; no one can ask for more than that. If you're always running late, set your clocks and watches fast and give yourself extra time. If your desk is a mess, file and throw away the clutter; just knowing where everything is saves time and cuts stress. Try to think positively about your work, avoid negative-thinking co-workers and pat yourself on the back about small accomplishments, even if no one else does. Many things at work are beyond our control - particularly the behaviour of other people. Rather than stressing out over them, focus on the things you can control such as the way you choose to react to problems.

Stop telling yourself and others that you're always busy

It has become ingrained into us that when we ask how things are, we automatically respond with 'oh very busy at the moment'. We believe that this should be the response delivered because if it isn't, you might be perceived as not working hard enough or pulling your weight. By telling ourselves that we are busy all the time it can add a level of stress that we don't need. When you're not super busy or heavily swamped, try a positive response such as 'actually, I am doing really well thanks'. Positive thoughts lead to more positive feelings, so try being more optimistic!



Work on your emotional intelligence

Even if you're in a job where the environment has grown increasingly stressful, you can retain a large measure of self-control and self-confidence by understanding and practicing emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the ability to manage and use your emotions in positive and constructive ways. When it comes to satisfaction and success at work, emotional intelligence matters just as much as intellectual ability. Emotional intelligence is about communicating with others in ways that draw people to you, overcome differences, repair wounded feelings, and defuse tension and stress.

Take care of yourself

When stress at work interferes with your ability to perform in your job, manage your personal life, or adversely impacts your health, it's time to take action. Start by paying attention to your physical and emotional health. When your own needs are taken care of, you're stronger and more resilient to stress. The better you feel, the better equipped you'll be to manage work stress without becoming overwhelmed. Taking care of yourself doesn't require a total lifestyle overhaul. Even small things can lift your mood, increase your energy and make you feel like you're back in the driver's seat. Take things one step at a time, and as you make more positive lifestyle choices, you'll soon notice a reduction in your stress levels, both at home and at work.

**EITHER YOU
RUN THE DAY
OR THE DAY
RUNS YOU**

Consider using your company's Employee Assistance Program or call Lifeline on 13 11 14, as having a chat with a professional can make all the difference to your stress levels.

NATURAL WAYS TO REDUCE STRESS



Stress is your body's way of responding to any kind of demand or threat. Your nervous system responds to stress by releasing a flood of stress hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol, which rouse the body for emergency action. Stress is a process, not a diagnosis. We experience it when there is an imbalance between the demands being made on us and our resources to cope with those demands. The level and extent of stress a person may feel depends a great deal on their attitude to a particular situation. An event that may be extremely stressful for one person can be a mere hiccup in another person's life. A balanced lifestyle and coping strategies can help you cope with stress, because if not managed properly, chronic stress can lead to illness. Increase your happiness and wellbeing with these natural remedies for combatting stress.

Meditation

A few minutes of practice of meditation per day can help ease anxiety. Research suggests that daily meditation may alter the brain's neural pathways, making you more resilient to stress. The technique is easy but it may take some getting used to, before you can really switch off your thoughts - simply sit up straight with both feet on the floor, or sit on the floor in a comfortable position. Close your eyes. Give yourself some silent time to let your thoughts run free or just focus on your breathing.



Massage

Everybody loves a massage, but did you know that its been used as a stress reliever for thousands of years? Historically, the Chinese used massage to open blocked energy channels in order to improve health, and Hippocrates, the 'father of Western medicine', used it for physical healing treatments. Today, we use massage to relax tense muscles, reduce pain and improve circulation, which can all do wonders for the mind.

Eat healthily

Too much stress over a long period not only depletes your body of nutrients, leaving you exhausted, it also alters your body's biochemistry, making it more likely you'll crave and overeat junk food. Healthy wholefoods like veggies, fruits, whole grains, protein and healthy fats can improve your mood and give you long-lasting energy to tackle everything that comes your way. Research has found foods that are especially effective for stress-busting include blueberries, salmon, avocado and almonds.

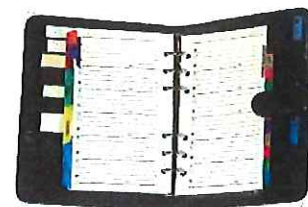


Control the caffeine

Steady on with that extra cup of coffee! While studies have shown that some coffee (1-2 cups) during the day can offer health benefits, too much caffeine (4+ cups) will make you jittery and anxious, and eventually lead to a crash. Make the switch to black or green tea, or better still, go for calming caffeine-free herbal teas. These days you can buy specialty blends of herbal tea that are designed to help you relax, such as lemon balm and chamomile.

Organise your life

Organisation offers a sense of control and peace of mind, and there's a number of ways you can improve this. If you're the kind of person who's always rushing around, it can help to make lists or set reminders on your phone so that you remember everything. Delegate tasks if you have to! If you're the kind of person who feels tense in their own house, tidy up. Studies have shown that the mere sight of clutter can put us on edge and being in a mess-free environment can help to clear the mind.

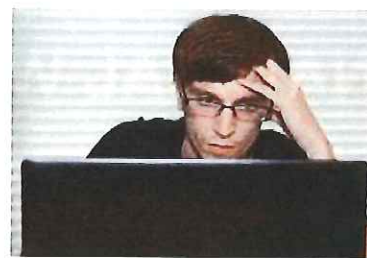


Exercise

Whether it's yoga, a team sport or running, exercise can help to ease stress and anxiety by helping the brain release endorphins (the 'feel-good' chemicals) which improve your mood and give your body a chance to practice dealing with stress. For some people, exercise takes their mind away from their worries and for others, it allows them time to be alone with their thoughts. Exercise is great for our physical, mental and emotional health, and the stress-relieving benefits can be felt from as little as a 20 minute walk.

Limit screen time

Disconnect, disconnect, disconnect! Part of the problem with reducing stress in today's world is that we are never truly able to shield ourselves from it. By turning away from the Internet and switching off our mobile phones, we can at least block some of the channels from which stress can reach us. Doing this also allows us to live in the moment and appreciate it. It is particularly important to avoid electronic use before sleep, which can help to reduce insomnia-related problems.



B vitamins

B vitamins are known to promote proper functioning of the brain and nervous system, as well as helping to induce relaxation and fight fatigue. In fact, indicators of B vitamin deficiency include irritability, depression and apathy, so to stave off those symptoms, increase your intake of foods rich in B vitamins. B vitamins are typically found in the germ and bran of cereal grains, as well as beans, peas, nuts, liver, eggs and dairy products.

Aromatherapy

In some cases, inhaling certain scents has been shown to have immediate stress relieving effects by raising mood, reducing anxiety and aiding focus and concentration. Experts say it's because the smells can stimulate the limbic system, which in turn releases chemicals that affect the brain, promoting feelings of relaxation, calmness, love and excitement. Popular oils for stress relief and mental fatigue include lavender, cypress and rosemary.



Sleep

Sleep is the most important natural stress reducer of them all. Too little sleep leaves us cranky, irritable and on edge. Too much sleep can leave us sluggish and depressed. Try to find the right balance that allows you to feel well-rested and ready for the day. Promote better sleep by establishing bedtime rituals that signal to your brain that it's time to fall asleep, such as avoiding exercise in the three hours before sleep or taking a warm bath. Certain foods can also promote sleep, such as carbohydrates, bananas, peanuts, figs, dairy and turkey. These foods all contain tryptophans, a precursor for creating melatonin.

Get back to nature

This certainly doesn't mean you have to summon your inner hippy! Taking a step back into nature can do wonders for your sense of wellbeing and has a calming effect on the body. Make the time to regularly head down to the park, lake, beach, or bush walking trail, whatever is local and enjoyable for you. While there take the time to notice the beauty of the surrounding area, listen for the birds and wildlife, feed the ducks or pick some flowers. It can be good to visit these areas without your ipod playing music to just allow yourself to relax and to fully appreciate the nature around you.



Sunrise and sunset

These are some of nature's most awe inspiring acts, and no two are the same. Taking the time to watch or notice the gorgeous and stunning sunsets can certainly give you a little lift. These natural events can have a real calming effect as you take time to observe and notice something positive about life. When was the last time you stopped and appreciated how beautiful they can be?

For further assistance, access your company's Employee Assistance Program for a confidential chat with a professional, or call Lifeline on 13 11 14.



Substance misuse – alcohol & other drugs



The misuse of alcohol and other drugs can have a damaging effect on the brain. It is important to get support if you need help to manage a substance use issue.

What is substance misuse?

Substance misuse is the inappropriate or excessive use of substances – alcohol and other drugs. This includes the misuse of illegal substances, such as cannabis, ice and amphetamines, and legal substances, such as alcohol, prescription medications, and nicotine.

Why do people misuse alcohol and other drugs?

People use alcohol and other drugs for a number of reasons. Some of the reasons include to relax, have fun, dull emotional or physical pain, or to escape from problems or difficulties experienced in life. The misuse of substances can lead to a dependence on the substance to cope in certain situations and may prevent you from learning to use healthy effective coping strategies. The use of substances to escape emotional pain or to avoid dealing with issues may be effective in the short term however the long-term impact on your health and wellbeing has serious consequences.

Some substances are highly addictive eliciting a physical and psychological dependence on the substance following regular continued use. People with lower levels of self-control, or an impairment of the brain inhibitory mechanisms, are more likely to develop a substance use disorder.

Signs of substance misuse or addiction:

- neglecting responsibilities and becoming disengaged from activities you previously enjoyed, including work, family, hobbies, sport and spending time with friends

- participating in dangerous or risky behaviours – drink driving, unprotected sex, using dirty needles
- criminal behaviour – stealing, purchase and use of illegal substances, causing physical harm to self or others
- relationship problems – difficulty maintaining relationships, conflict with partner, family or friends, loss of friendships, family or relationship breakdown
- physical symptoms – developing a tolerance to the substance and increased usage to experience the same effects; withdrawal symptoms when not using the substance
- mental illness – substance use may cause a person to experience symptoms of depression, anxiety, paranoia or psychosis and may trigger an underlying mental disorder
- inability to control use of the substance – being unable reduce or stop using the substance
- substance use has significantly taken over your life and impaired your ability to function.

Risks of misusing alcohol and other drugs:

Legal and illegal drugs such as cannabis, ice and cocaine can be misused leading to accidental overdose or death. Misuse of alcohol and other drugs may be to manage or mask the effects of an underlying mental illness which may go untreated. Drug use is a risk factor for suicidality. People under the influence of alcohol or other drugs have impaired judgement, loss of normal inhibition and may act impulsively.

Ready to help 24/7.

13 11 14

www.lifeline.org.au

 Lifeline

What if a person doesn't want help?

- Give the person information such as websites, so that they can read about the dangers of alcohol and drug use in their own time. They can also take an online alcohol/drug usage 'test'
- Let them know that you care for them, and are concerned about their wellbeing
- Set boundaries for inappropriate behaviour, e.g. aggression, alcohol/drug use in the home.
- Avoid nagging them to get help
- Ensure they know where to get help should they want to talk about their alcohol/drug use
- See someone yourself e.g. GP, counsellor, psychologist. They can give you tips on how best to support the person, and how to look after yourself



Where to go to for support?

- Phone Lifeline on 13 11 14 (available 24/7) or chat to a Crisis Supporter online at lifeline.org.au (7pm – midnight every night)
- National Cannabis Information and Helpline 1800 30 40 50 (11am–7pm Mon to Fri) or visit www.ncpic.org.au
- Alcoholics Anonymous Australia 1300 222 222 or visit www.aa.org.au
- Narcotics Anonymous Australia 1300 652 820 or visit www.na.org.au
- Quitline: 13 78 48 or visit www.quitnow.gov.au
- Mensline Australia: 1300 78 99 78 (24hrs)
- Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800
- eheadspace (Age 12–25): www.eheadspace.org.au

For local services and centres in your area, visit the Lifeline Service Finder Directory at www.lifeline.org.au/get-help/service-finder

It is important to identify when your use of alcohol or other drugs becomes a problem and seek help.

For 24-hour telephone crisis support call 13 11 14. For more information visit www.lifeline.org.au

Ready to help 24/7.
 **13 11 14**

www.lifeline.org.au

 **Lifeline**

What to do when you feel overwhelmed by life pressures



What is stress?

When faced with a challenging situation or stressful event, our bodies respond by activating the nervous system and releasing hormones including cortisol and adrenalin.

These hormones bring about certain physical changes in the body, helping us to react appropriately and deal with the challenge presented. However, if the stress is ongoing and the physical changes do not subside, we may feel overwhelmed and unable to cope.

Life pressures that can cause us to feel overwhelmed and stressed include:

- Relationship difficulties
- Family breakdown
- Illness or injury
- Work pressures or job loss
- Bullying and harassment
- Traumatic events
- Death of a loved one - including pets
- Financial difficulties
- Homelessness
- Lack of support and isolation

What are the signs of stress?

Below are some of the signs which indicate our stress levels are unhealthy:

- Feeling overwhelmed and unable to cope
- Feeling hyperalert and anxious
- Difficulty sleeping
- Changes in appetite
- Headaches and muscle tension
- Upset stomach
- Irritability
- Difficulty concentrating
- Changes in mood
- Fatigue and exhaustion
- Withdrawing from friends and family
- Thoughts of suicide
- Reliance on alcohol or other substances to cope

People respond differently to stressful situations. Responses to stress will be determined by the situation faced, past experiences, personality, social support, access to resources and cultural background. What one person finds stressful, another may be more easily able to cope with.

Knowing yourself and how you respond to different situations is important as you can then learn to manage stress and seek help when necessary.

What to do when feeling overwhelmed?

Below are some practical strategies for managing stress when feeling overwhelmed by life pressures:

- **Identify the cause of your stress** – write down what is contributing to you feeling overwhelmed and stressed. You may identify one particular issue or have a range of things contributing to how you feel at this time. Prioritise the issues and leave smaller issues to be dealt with at a later time.
- **Review your current coping mechanisms** – identify how you have been coping to date. What tools and strategies have you found helpful? What things are you doing that are not helpful? Make any necessary changes to increase your ability to cope.
- **Talk to a trusted friend or family member** – talking through your issues with someone you trust can assist you to work through the issue and identify possible solutions.
- **Check your thinking** – often we put pressure on ourselves to be a certain way. Our thoughts directly impact our emotional state and can influence our behaviour. When our thoughts are negative and self-critical we may begin to feel overwhelmed. Instead of doing the things we need to do in order to deal with the stressful situation, we may in fact do things that are unhelpful.

Ready to help 24/7.

13 11 14

www.lifeline.org.au

 Lifeline

- Give yourself some positive feedback for the things you have been doing to manage. Consider if the expectations you place on yourself are reasonable and adjust them accordingly. Demonstrate compassion to yourself as you would to others in a similar situation.
- **Make a positive plan** – work out ways to deal with the situation or how to approach it step by step. Write down the actions that need to be taken to bring about some change. Start at the beginning and focus on one thing at a time. Recognise when you need help to bring about change.
- **Take care of yourself** – we need to be healthy in order to meet life's challenges. Eating well, exercising and getting plenty of sleep are the basic building blocks of resilience. Take time out to engage in activities you enjoy and find rewarding. Engage in positive relationships with friends and family.
- **Access local support services** – there may be certain situations when you need to gain support from services in the community. For example, you may need to access counselling services when experiencing family and relationship difficulties or accommodation services if experiencing homelessness or domestic violence.



Where to go to for support?

If in need of support, you may consider talking to your GP or health professional about your current situation. Your GP can check your general health and assess for any physical signs of stress. They can refer you to local health professionals based on your needs or visit the Lifeline Service Finder Directory at <https://www.lifeline.org.au/get-help/service-finder> to search for local services and centres in your area.

Below are some of the places to go for information and support:

- Phone Lifeline on 13 11 14 (available 24/7) or chat to a Crisis Supporter online at [lifeline.org.au](https://www.lifeline.org.au) (7pm – midnight every night)
- Mensline Australia: 1300 78 99 78 (24hrs)
- Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800

It is important to be able to identify when stress is affecting us in a negative way. Identifying the cause of our stress and making changes where possible is a good starting point.

For 24-hour telephone crisis support call 13 11 14. For more information visit www.lifeline.org.au

Ready to help 24/7.
 **13 11 14**

www.lifeline.org.au

 **Lifeline**

ALCOHOL USE



Alcohol is part of the Australian culture and way of life. Australians drink alcohol to relax, socialise, celebrate, and for its taste. Nevertheless, the consumption of alcohol carries a risk of adverse health and social consequences related to its intoxicating and dependence-producing properties. In addition to the chronic diseases that may develop in those who drink large amounts of alcohol over a number of years, alcohol use is also associated with an increased risk of acute health conditions, such as injuries, including from traffic accidents.

Effects of Alcohol

Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant, and the effects of drinking can be felt in the body in as little as 10 minutes after having a drink. However, like any drug (including alcohol), the effects vary from person to person. How alcohol affects a person depends on many things including their size, weight and health, also whether the person is used to it and whether other drugs are taken. The effects of any drug also depend on the amount taken.

Low to Moderate Doses

Some of the effects that may be experienced after drinking alcohol include:

- Feeling relaxed
- Mild euphoria
- Reduced coordination and slower reflexes
- Lowered inhibitions
- Increased confidence
- Increased risky or dangerous behaviour
- Blurred vision
- Slurred speech
- Flushed appearance
- Headache, nausea, vomiting
- Impaired sleep

Higher Doses

When someone drinks heavily (4 or more drinks on one occasion) over a short period with the intention of becoming drunk, it is referred to as "binge drinking". Binge drinking is harmful because it results in immediate and severe drunkenness. As well as the health risks, it can lead people to take unnecessary risks and put themselves and others in danger.

Some common effects of binge drinking are:

- Headaches
- Tremors
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Coma

Alcohol and Cancer risk

In Australia, it is estimated that alcohol contributes to 3% of new cancer cases each year. Alcohol is a carcinogen which means it is a known cause of cancer and evidence indicates that consuming alcohol increases the risk of at least seven different types of cancer. These include:

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| • Breast cancer | • Larynx cancer |
| • Liver cancer | • Oesophagus cancer |
| • Mouth cancer | • Bowel cancer |
| • Pharynx cancer | |



What about the reported health benefits?

The Heart Foundation does not recommend alcohol consumption as a method to treat or prevent heart disease. Moderate alcohol intake has been proposed as having health benefits for some middle-aged or older people, however, recent scientific evidence suggests that the potential for health benefits may have been overestimated in earlier studies. Any possible health benefits can be gained from methods other than drinking alcohol, such as regular exercise, eat a healthy diet and quit smoking. These methods can also reduce your risk of cancer.

Drinking Guidelines

National guidelines for alcohol consumption have been developed by the National Health and Medical Research Council to help reduce the risk of harm from alcohol consumption. They do not apply to those under the legal drinking age or to pregnant women. Those on medication or with a history of illness should consult their general practitioner for specific advice. The guidelines can help with making informed choices and help to reduce the risk of alcohol-related accidents, injuries, diseases and death, both in the short and long term.






The guidelines recommend that healthy men and women should drink:

- No more than ten standard drinks per week in order to reduce the risk of harm from alcohol-related diseases or injury in the long term
- No more than four standard drinks on any one day in order to reduce the risk of alcohol-related injury in the short term

What is a standard drink?

A standard drink contains 10 grams of pure alcohol. It is important to note that drink serving sizes are often more than one standard drink. Wine especially varies greatly in alcoholic content, usually between nine and 16 per cent, and some cocktails can contain as much as 5 or 6 standard drinks, depending on the recipe. Understanding how to count standard drinks can help you keep track of how much alcohol you consume.

The amount of safe consumption will also depend on your age, size, gender, health, and how and when you consume alcohol. Both the speed of consumption and whether you're eating will also affect how alcohol is absorbed by the body.

Each of these is 1 standard drink					
					
Sparkling wine	Wine	Light beer	Regular beer	Fortified wine	Spirits
100 mL	100 mL	425 mL	285 mL	60 mL	30 mL
13% alc/vol	13% alc/vol	2.7% alc/vol	4.9% alc/vol	20% alc/vol	40% alc/vol
Pre-mixed spirits have between 1.5 – 2.4 standard drinks each					

There is no safe level of alcohol use

The less alcohol you drink, the lower your risk of alcohol-related harm. Use of alcohol or other drugs always carries some risk - even medications can produce unwanted side effects. It is important to be careful when taking any type of drug, including alcohol. Drinking alcohol is also not recommended if you have uncontrolled high blood pressure. You should seek your doctor's advice regarding alcohol consumption if you are currently on any medication, or have a history of mental or physical illness in the family.

Tips to reduce the risk to your health when drinking

- Eat before you drink
- Space your drinks with water or other non-alcohol drinks
- Organise safe transport (book a taxi, use public transport or have a designated driver)
- Say no when you know you've had enough
- Don't leave your drink unattended
- Don't mix alcohol with other drugs
- Don't drink at all before undertaking any risky activities (eg. swimming, driving or boating)
- Support your friend's decision if they choose not to drink

Enjoy alcohol responsibly, and aim to have at least one or two alcohol free days a week.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- DrugInfo: 1300 858 584
- DirectLine: 1800 888 236
- Family Drug Help: 1300 660 068



CAFFEINE AND STIMULANTS

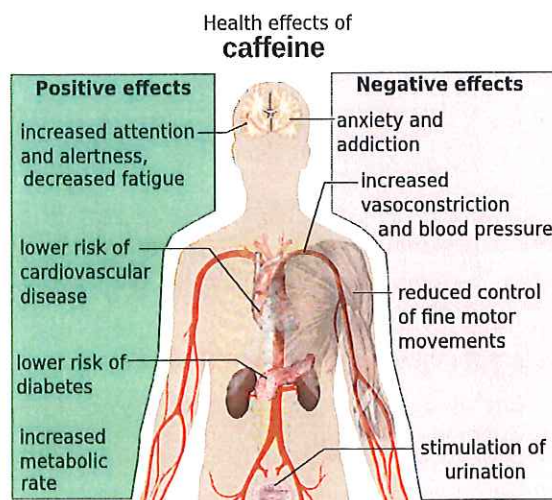


Caffeine is a naturally occurring compound found in the leaves and fruits of certain plants, such as coffee beans, tea leaves, guarana, yerba mate and cacao beans. Caffeine is found in beverages such as coffee, tea, cocoa, cola drinks and energy drinks. It is also found in chocolate bars, energy bars, pre-workout powders, weight loss supplements and some over-the-counter medications, such as cough syrup. Both natural and synthetic forms of caffeine are enjoyed safely by consumers around the world every day. Not surprisingly though, the single biggest contributor to caffeine in the Australian diet comes from coffee, whether it's instant coffee, from a coffee machine, plunger or barista-made coffee.

Caffeine, stimulants and the body

It is important to remember that caffeine and stimulants do not actually give you energy. Food with carbohydrates and fat gives your body energy (rarely protein). When you consume caffeine and other stimulants such as taurine and guarana, these compounds interact with the central nervous system. This interaction causes the release of hormones that speeds up messages travelling between the brain and the body and can mask your fatigue.

Caffeine works on the body in similar ways to the hormone adrenaline. It stimulates the central nervous system by blocking adenosine, which is a neurotransmitter that normally causes a calming effect in the body. When adenosine is blocked, the adrenal glands are stimulated to release adrenaline. Adrenaline increases your heart rate, blood pressure and more glucose is released into your blood stream. Caffeine also increases the dopamine levels, which activate the pleasure centre in the brain.



Side effects of caffeine and stimulants

Physiologically, caffeine makes the body feel more alert, makes you feel a little better and makes you feel like you have more energy. It is important to remember however, that caffeine is masking your level of fatigue by making it work harder; it is not actually fixing it. Like many other drugs, it is possible to develop a tolerance to caffeine, which means ever-greater doses are needed to achieve the same effect.

Some people are more sensitive to caffeine than others, and even one cup may cause side effects, with size, weight and tolerance determining susceptibility. Heavy caffeine consumption has been linked, over time, with lowering bone density, which could lead to osteoporosis.

Some of the signs and symptoms of excessive amounts of caffeine intake include:

- Insomnia
- Increase in body temperature
- Frequent urination
- Dehydration
- Trembling hands
- Dizziness and headaches
- Rapid heartbeat (palpitations)
- Restlessness and excitability
- Anxiety and irritability
- After the energy burst, an even greater feeling of fatigue
- Nausea and diarrhea
- Fertility issues
- Adrenal fatigue



Caffeine and sleep

Sleep seems to be the physiological function most sensitive to the effects of caffeine. After consuming a cup of coffee, the caffeine begins to work fully in about 60 minutes. The half-life of caffeine is approximately 6 hours. For example, if you drink a strong coffee with 200mg of caffeine at 4pm, at 10pm when you are trying to get some sleep you still have around 100mg working in your system, keeping you alert and awake. It is particularly important to remember that even if you can easily fall asleep, the caffeine remaining in your system could be impacting on your sleep cycles. This interaction will impair your body's ability to get a restful sleep, leaving you feeling even more tired the next day.

How much is enough/too much?

How much caffeine a person can consume depends in large part on the individual's sensitivity to caffeine. Use the table opposite to calculate your daily intake. The European Safety Authority published the latest landmark opinion on the safety of caffeine in May 2015. Key findings were:

- *Daily caffeine intakes from all sources up to 400mg per day do not raise safety concerns for adults in the general population, except pregnant women;*
- *Daily caffeine intakes from all sources up to 200mg per day by pregnant women do not raise safety concerns for the fetus;*
- *Single doses of caffeine up to 200mg, corresponding to about 3mg/kg body weight for a 70kg adult are unlikely to induce clinically relevant changes in blood pressure, myocardial blood flow, hydration status or body temperature.*

Source	Serve	Caffeine
Espresso	30ml shot	64mg
Espresso based coffee (latte, cappuccino etc)	200ml cup	60 - 250mg
Instant coffee	200ml cup	60 - 100mg
Iced coffee*	600ml carton	115 - 140mg
Black tea	200ml cup	30 - 100mg
Green tea	200ml cup	30 - 50mg
Chocolate drink*	200ml cup	10 - 15mg
Energy drink*	250ml can	80 - 90mg
Cola drink*	375ml can	35 - 50mg
Chocolate*	100g bar	20 - 90mg

*These also contain a considerable amount of sugar.

A note on energy drinks

Energy drinks contain synthetic caffeine, as well as ingredients such as taurine and guarana (a natural source of caffeine). Guarana and taurine are marketed as increasing energy, but clinical evidence for this has not been clearly established. Energy drinks are of concern due to their high caffeine and sugar content; children, pregnant women and anyone sensitive to caffeine should avoid them. In fact, recent research has found that the combination of caffeine and sugar in these energy drinks caused teenagers' blood glucose and insulin levels to 'spike'. Results showed that consumption of a caffeine-containing energy drink caused a 20 to 30% increase in insulin and glucose levels in response to a glucose load.

Since caffeine persists in the system for 4 to 6 hours after consumption, continuous insulin resistance associated with regular energy drink consumption in adolescents could contribute to increased metabolic risk (including type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease) in susceptible individuals later in life through persistent interference with their regular glucose metabolism.

Health benefits of coffee

Drinking coffee was once lumped into the same 'unhealthy habit' category as smoking and drinking alcohol. However, there has been plenty of research showing the health benefits of drinking coffee. Researchers believe it is the combination of the caffeine and compounds and antioxidants present in coffee beans. Some reported benefits include:

- *Delayed onset of Alzheimer's disease, and in some cases, prevention of the disease all together. Studies found that drinking about 3 cups of coffee per day was optimal compared to no coffee consumption, though once consumption reached more than 4 cups per day, that protection disappears.*
- *Decreased risk of type 2 diabetes, liver disease, Parkinson's disease and some cancers, (such as colon, liver and prostate cancer) through regular coffee consumption of 2 - 4 cups per day*
- *A decreased risk of death at any age for both men (10% decrease) and women (13% decrease) was found in subjects who drank 2 - 3 cups of coffee per day*



It is important to note that the majority of this research is associative in nature, so definitive conclusions can't be drawn, though they are certainly compelling. For most people, the health benefits of regular coffee consumption outweigh any negatives, although it is important to know your own limits and check with your doctor if you have any adverse symptoms from caffeine.

CAFFEINE CALCULATOR



Caffeine has been called the most popular drug in the world. It is found naturally in over 60 plants including the coffee bean, tea leaf, kola nut and cacao pod. All over the world people consume caffeine on a daily basis in coffee, tea, cocoa, chocolate, energy drinks, weight loss supplements, some soft drinks and some medications.

Use the tables to determine how much caffeine you consume on an average day. **A maximum daily consumption should be less than 400mg.**

Remember that often the time of consumption is just as important as the quantity of caffeine you consume. If you consume the caffeine too close to the time you wish to sleep, it can affect your ability to fall to sleep and/or your quality of sleep during the night.

When calculating your consumption in the table below, ensure you consider if you have strong versions of the product or more mild versions. If stronger, choose the higher end of the scale.

Source	Amount	Caffeine content
Espresso based coffee	200ml cup	60 - 250mg
Instant coffee	200ml cup	60 - 100mg
Decaffeinated coffee	200ml cup	2 - 4mg
Iced coffee	600ml carton	115 - 140mg
Black tea	200ml cup	30 - 100mg
Green tea	200ml cup	30 - 50mg
Chocolate drink	200ml cup	10 - 15mg
Energy drink	250ml can	80 - 90mg
Cola drink	375ml can	35 - 50mg
Milk chocolate	100g bar	20 - 30mg
Dark chocolate	100g bar	70 - 90mg

Type of beverage or food	Quantity		Weak mg		Strong mg	Total mg
Espresso based coffee		@	60	or	200	
Instant coffee		@	60	or	100	
Decaf coffee		@	2	or	4	
Iced coffee		@	115	or	140	
Black tea		@	30	or	110	
Green tea		@	30	or	50	
Chocolate drink		@	10	or	15	
Energy drink		@	90			
Cola drink		@	50			
Milk chocolate		@	30			
Dark chocolate		@	90			
					Daily total average	



