

Stress is a response to an event or situation. It can be positive or negative. Stress is common in daily life and may be associated with work, school, family or personal relationships. It usually means that something is happening that's causing worry and affecting how we are thinking and feeling.

Abnormal stress can have many troublesome physical and emotional effects on us, but they vary from person to person. Common problems are tiredness, fatigue, anxiety, sleep disturbance, poor concentration, restlessness and irritability. Stress-related illnesses include depression, drug abuse (including problem drinking), irritable digestive system, peptic ulcers, headaches, mouth ulcers, impotence, irritable bladder, dermatitis—skin rashes, heart disease, breast pain and cancer.

The first step in reducing stress is to identify what stress is and how it impacts on your life. We have all experienced stress and know what it feels like to be stressed. It is a part of life. But it is still an individual experience, and has different meanings to different people. Some people might describe stress as tension, others as worry or a feeling of being out of control or overwhelmed. Ask yourself this question: **What does stress mean to you and how does it interfere with your life??**

Stress can be triggered by many external factors. These may involve significant life events such as injury, illness, relationship breakdown, or death of a family member. Everyday concerns, such as financial or work worries, an overdue school assignment, or family problems can also trigger stress.

The experience of stress is also influenced by internal factors. What that means is that a single event can happen to 100 people in the same external environment and yet there are 100 different versions of what that event was. How an individual person responds to stress will be determined by their:

- perception of the stress (some people are extremely threatened by giving a speech, and might have a panic attack while others really enjoy it)
- personality factors, including "locus of control" (perceived degree of control over what happens to both themselves and others around them)
- expectations of themselves (some people have very high expectations of how they will perform, and feel stressed by wanting to achieve such a high level)
- coping skills they have learnt in the past to help them deal with the stress

What can you do to cope better?

- Talk it over with someone—regular chats with a trusted person can be really helpful. This could be family, friends, acquaintances, teachers, doctor, nurse, community mental health worker, priest or some of the phone number services like Lifeline
- Look for solutions: stop escaping. Write the problem down, look at the pro's and con's in finding a solution. Also remember to take a break
- Practice relaxation eg. Listen to music, pay attention to your breathing. Consider aromatherapy, perhaps with a massage
- Learn to meditate, practice positive thinking, get plenty of rest
- Develop healthy hobbies—eg. Sport, creative outlets, bush-walking
- Do things that you enjoy eg. go to the movies or a concert / show
- Eat sensibly—3 meals a day, 2 serves of fruit and 5 serves of veggies
- Exercise for 30 minutes, 4–5 x a week; drink plenty of water
- Avoid smoking and other drugs, and limit alcohol and caffeine drinks
- Consider getting a pet
- Humour and laughter are great stress relievers. So try having a joke with a friend or hire a comedy DVD / video. Sometimes it is a real effort but remember it can bring about positive effects.

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ALICE SPRINGS FAMILY MEDICAL CENTRE

NEWSLETTER 6/08

ASFMC Management would like to welcome our new receptionist Debbie McIntyre, due to Meri relocating interstate. So our reception team is now Jodie, Debbie and at times Susie still helps out at the front area.

From the second week of April until after the June long weekend, ASFMC will no longer be able to staff a Saturday morning clinic. There will be no after hours provided on the long weekends, Easter, May Day and June weekend. This is so our solo GP can also have a break. ASFMC Management are trying to implement some small changes to better manage our stress levels—time to start taking our own advice!!! We have now been open for > 18 months, and working 6—7 days a week for Dr. Mitchell is no longer sustainable. Please remember the ASAP after hours clinic on the hospital grounds.

This newsletter is an opportunity for us to both inform and educate our patients about some upcoming changes to practice policy and topics of interest.



Please respect the no smoking policy on the entire grounds of the clinic.

Proud to be working with the community to improve Central Australian Health

**17 Stuart Highway
Entrance off Kekwick Ave
Parking at rear
Phone 08 8952 7774 ALL HOURS**

NATIONAL YOUTH WEEK 5—13th April 2008

ASFMC applied for part-funding in producing a "Youth Mental Health Newsletter" which we posted out to all our patients in the 12—25 year old demographic group. This is the close to 700 active patients, plus we also sent copies to the local schools as a resource.

If you are interested please pick up a copy from our front reception, or look on our website for this newsletter and our other ones over the last 18 months.

We also included a self assessment exercise on how balanced lifestyle is? This too is on our website and available at the front reception. See if you score > 40 / 50, or like some of us, realise your current lifestyle is far from balanced!!!!

LOOK, LISTEN, TALK & SEEK HELP

Websites for young people:

www.headroom.net.au

www.beyondblue.org.au

www.ybblue.org.au

www.moodgym.anu.edu.au

www.itsallright.org

www.climate.tv

www.reachout.com.au

www.depressioNet.com.au



CANNABIS—MARIJUANA—THC

Cannabis is the most widely used illicit (illegal) drug in Australia. According to the 2004 National Drug Household Survey 34% of the Australian population reported using cannabis at some time, with 11% having used it in the last 12 months.

26% of 14—19 year old reported ever using cannabis.

55% of 20—29 year old reported ever using cannabis.

The average age of first use was 18 years of age.

Long term effects are associated with an increased risk of respiratory illnesses associated with smoking, including cancers. People also suffer with decreased memory and learning abilities, and decreased motivation in areas such as school and work, affecting their potential later in life. Think next time someone offers you a toke!!! - it might not be as harmless as you think.



SKIN CANCER CHECKS

Due to patient demand and recent media exposure, skin cancer checks have become increasingly popular. Dr. Mitchell has done the "Certificate in Primary Care Skin Cancer Medicine" through the University of Queensland. She is trained in the use of dermoscopy which magnifies suspicious skin lesions to better diagnose skin cancers. We also have access to digital photography and loupe magnification to better enhance skin assessment and documentation.

Please consider the role of our Thursday afternoon "SKIN CANCER" clinics for a full skin check. This will involve being undressed and looked at under loupe magnification for any suspicious skin lesions. It includes the scalp, face, chest, back, arms and hands, legs, soles of feet and at times, eyes and mouth. Any lesions the doctor or yourself are concerned about can be further magnified with the dermatoscope to confirm if excision is required. No other issues would be able to be covered in that appointment due to time pressures on the doctor—if a simple punch biopsy was recommended this may or may not be done on the same day.

Full excisions are only offered after a thorough skin check—these are scheduled for Tuesday and Friday afternoons only. If a lesion was discussed with Dr. Mitchell more than 6 months prior, another review would be recommended before a procedure was accepted by our reception staff for "cutting procedures".

These are **starting Thursday 10th April 2008**, and then every 3 weeks. So the next clinic dates are on 1st May and 22nd May respectively. They are a double appointment and if procedures are done at the same time, extra costs may be incurred. If you would like to book, please do so through our front reception.



VENEPUNCTURE—BLOOD TAKING BY PRACTICE NURSE

Due to patient requests, Susie our practice nurse is available on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings at 0830—0930 hrs by appointment only to take bloods. This is not a free service— it costs \$30 and attracts a \$15 rebate. We have started offering this service due to feedback about long delays at the labs for fasting blood tests.

ALCOHOL

Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant, although in smaller amounts it may appear to have a mild stimulant effect. The main psychoactive ingredient in alcoholic beverages is ethyl alcohol, produced by the fermentation of sugar by yeast. Alcoholic drinks vary in strength eg, beer and alcoholic sodas can be between 1—9% alcohol, wines 10—15% and spirits 35—55%.

Alcohol is a legal drug that is sanctioned by cultural and social norms in Australia. 70—80 % of the population drinks in a way that causes few problems. Alcohol contributes to gross national product (GDP) yet the annual cost to the Australian community of alcohol-related social problems is estimated to be \$7.6 billion.

Intoxication is the most common cause of alcohol-related problems, leading to injuries and premature death. As a result, intoxication accounts for 2/3 of the years of life lost from drinking. Alcohol is responsible for:

- 30% of road accidents
- 44% of fire injuries
- 34% of falls and drowning
- 16% of child abuse cases
- 12% of suicides
- 10% of industrial accidents



**AA — Alice Springs
8953 0802**

As well as deaths, short-term effects of alcohol result in illness and loss of work/school productivity eg. Hangovers, drink driving offences. In addition, alcohol contributes to criminal behaviour—in Australia > 70% of prisoners convicted of violent assault have drunk alcohol before committing the offence and > 40% of domestic violence involve alcohol. Each year, approximately 3000 people in Australia die as a result of excessive alcohol consumption and around 65,000 people are hospitalised.

**WOMEN: Less than 2x Standard Drinks per day,
with 2x alcohol free days per week**

**MEN: Less than 4x Standard Drinks per day, with 2x
alcohol free days per week**

Alcohol and Drug Information Service 1300 13 1340