

Is Stress Making You Sick?

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Do you seem to get sick easily?

DO YOU HAVE CHRONIC HEADACHES? Muscle pain? Heartburn? Constipation? Do you suffer from high blood pressure? Low sex drive? Are you constantly tired? Do you seem to constantly get sick? Have trouble concentrating? Feel unmotivated? Irritable? Have cold hands and feet? Heart palpitations? Well, this could be a result of stress.

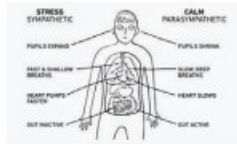
Everyone knows that stress can wreak havoc on your mental health, but were you aware that people who experience chronic stress are shown to have a 50% higher mortality rate when compared to individuals who don't? In fact, chronic stress has been linked to increased chance of stroke, heart disease, fibromyalgia, depression, diabetes, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Multiple Sclerosis, and even infertility and cancer (National Institute of Health, 2021).

Why is that?

When someone experiences a stressor—whether an event, relationship, environment—our bodies react on an unconscious level in response. Our body goes into survival mode and releases hormones and neurotransmitters, shuts down parts of our brains, and slows down the parts of our body that are not needed when we are faced with a threat.

Our digestive system slows down, our immune system becomes weaker, our blood pressure and heart rate increase, our muscles tense, and our breathing becomes shallow. And while these reactions are necessary to increase survival in a life-threatening situation, they have the opposite effect on our bodies in the long run.

So, what happens when we are in a constant state of stress (also referred to as chronic stress) and our body never truly relaxes? The nervous system stays dysregulated.



What is Dysregulation?

Our nervous system oversees our body's fight or flight response (sympathetic nervous system) which is activated during life-threatening and/or stressful situations, as well as the parasympathetic nervous system that helps our body return to its regulated baseline state. The sympathetic



and parasympathetic nervous systems should always be in sync or in harmony. However, when this balance is disturbed by past trauma, chronic stress, lack of social support, poor living conditions, or even from unresolved past circumstances, we can become dysregulated. When our body activates too much fight or flight response and we do not get enough rest to balance it out, that is when nervous system dysregulation occurs.

What are some signs of a Nervous System Dysregulation?

- Elevated or irregular heart rate
- Anxiety or agitation
- Nausea or feeling 'off'
- Short of breath **shortness of breath**
- Feeling frozen or 'stuck'
- Sweating
- Feeling on edge
- Feeling overstimulated



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