

## Background Information

### Stress

**Anxiety:** *a generalized feeling of fear characterized by physical symptoms*  
**Stress:** *any factor that threatens the health of the body or has an adverse effect on its functioning, such as injury, disease or worry*

### What You Should Know About Stress

- Stress can be a positive motivator, or it can negatively interfere with our everyday life.
- Events in life that create stress are called stressors. Stressors can be brought on by people, events, or issues in life. (e.g., changing schools may be classified as a stressor).
- People are affected differently by stress. Everyone has a different personality and different ways of coping with life situations.
- Adopting healthy stress-management skills is important in order to learn how to cope with stress.
- Different people want and need different amounts of stress (e.g., some people perform better under stress or a tight time line, and others feel constrained when stressed).

### Symptoms of Stress:

- Cold hands
- Anxiety
- Insomnia
- Dry mouth
- Over or under eating
- Indigestion
- Tiredness
- Chronic depression
- Headaches
- Constipation
- Low self-image
- Procrastination
- Performing reckless actions
- Body aches

### Some Causes of Stress:

- Experiencing tensions about school or work
- Having to make an important decision
- Not having control over your surroundings
- Going through a major change in your life
- Use of unhealthy substances
- Having conflict with your family members
- Experiencing certain fears or thoughts

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Tobacco use (as well as the use of other substances) are unhealthy coping mechanisms for stress. It is important to reinforce that using tobacco is an unhealthy way of managing stress.

### Positive Ways to Reduce Stress

- Talk about your stressors. Talk about how you are feeling and what you can do to manage stress.
- Do something that is healthy. (e.g., go for a walk)
- Use your imagination. (e.g., picture yourself in a place that makes you smile)
- Use humour - learn to laugh at yourself.
- Listen to music that either relaxes you, or makes you want to get up and dance.
- Practise deep breathing.
- Be physically active. (e.g., exercise)

### When to Seek Professional Help

Seek help when you are experiencing one or more of the following:

- Distressing thoughts, behaviours or emotions that last more than three to four weeks;
- You continue to have difficulty functioning as you normally do at school, with family or in social/recreational activities;
- There are continuing physical symptoms that do not resolve themselves in one to two days;
- Use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs to deal with your problems;
- At any time you feel a sense of hopelessness or are helpless about your emotions, behaviours and/or life.

For more information on stress and when to seek professional help, see the following link:

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/life-vie/stress-eng.php>