



# DEALING WITH STRESS

01

## What is meant by stress?

By stress, we mean tension in your body. Stress is a natural reaction that causes your body to be alert and allows you to react immediately. Your muscles tighten unconsciously and your breathing and heart rate increase. Stress can be useful at first. In the long term, it can also get in the way and result in discomfort and ailments. This information sheet discusses the negative consequences of stress and how you can positively influence them.

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## When do we experience stress?

We experience stress when we are busy or worried. There are daily factors that can lead to stress, for example irritations such as noise pollution, workload, money problems, a sick family member, but also a conflict or a shocking event. In many cases, sudden illness also leads to stress. This has to do with thoughts and emotions related to the physical condition, thoughts such as 'Can I practice my sport again at my previous level?', or 'Will my condition get worse?'. The fear of having to experience increased shortness of breath can also lead to stress.

## Reducing Stress

Firstly, it is important to learn to recognize signs of stress. You can think of signals such as higher and faster breathing, fatigue, a higher heart rate, high muscle tension and sweating, but also signals such as insomnia, a rushed feeling, being irritable, or attention and concentration problems. Next, it is important to check for yourself that you can recognize that the stress is too much. If stress becomes a problem, it is best to acknowledge it and try to do something about it or seek help through your health professional. If you have annoying flashbacks or negative thoughts that result in you avoiding things, it is also important to contact your health professional. You can't always avoid stress completely. However, you can reduce the tension, for example by:

- Practising relaxation (relaxation exercises, yoga, taking up hobbies);
- Discussing your concerns with a trusted person;
- Positive thinking (recognizing negative thoughts and converting them into helping thoughts);
- Keeping a stress diary;
- Eating healthily and regularly;
- Developing good sleeping habits;
- Keeping moving (gently with more breaks);
- Doing relaxation exercises (e.g. inhaling and exhaling deeply);
- Avoiding smoking and excessive alcohol consumption

