Stress Symptoms

Any symptom that is unusual for you can indicate stress.

**Tense muscles, sore neck, shoulders, & back**

A person under stress may be so tense that they experience muscle cramps. Tight neck, shoulder, and upper back muscles may lead to headache. Other tight muscles may cause backache.

**Insomnia**

Trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or early waking. Tense muscles and increased heart and breathing rate brought on by stress can cause insomnia.

**Fatigue**

This is a symptom of stress unless the fatigue is brought on by physical exertion.

**Boredom, depression, listlessness**

A person who is constantly in any of these states and does not "snap out of it" is under stress, which saps them of their energy.

**Drinking too much**

Drinking to escape problems creates more problems. Danger signals are: needing a drink, drinking every day or at a set hour, drinking from the bottle, drinking first thing in the morning, blacking out.

**Eating too much or too little**

Compulsive eating can put added strain on the heart, kidneys, and arteries, and can create self-disgust (a major stressor). Eating too little can signify withdrawal and depression.

**Diarrhea, cramps, gas, constipation**

Symptoms of digestive distress can come from spoiled food or viral infection, but
persistent trouble can indicate stress. The blood is drawn away from the digestive system.

**Palpitations (heart skip)**

The stress alarm increases the rate of heartbeat, causing a feeling of palpitations or heart skip. This can result in a destructive cycle of fear--stress alarm--palpitations--fear of palpitations--alarm.

**Phobias**

Unfounded fears, such as fear of enclosed places, heights, etc. could be a sign of stress caused by hidden emotional conflicts.

---

**Source URL:** [https://campushealth.unc.edu/health-topics/stress-and-anxiety/stress-symptoms](https://campushealth.unc.edu/health-topics/stress-and-anxiety/stress-symptoms)