

## Wellness

### Stress and your health at work

# Stress less by working on your wellbeing

According to Bupa Healthwatch research data, around four in ten Australians feel they are working long hours, and just as many say they come home from work feeling exhausted. These feelings may contribute to stress and affecting health and wellbeing, even when work is also delivering on positive aspects such as purpose, satisfaction and income.

In addition to long hours, many factors can contribute to workplace stress including the physical environment you work in and your lifestyle habits. The good news is, with some thought, some effort, and a few simple changes, you can help reduce the impact of work-related stress on your health and wellbeing.

#### Taking care at work

Make sure your workspace is comfortable and suitable for the work you have to do, with proper workspace design. Along with improving your posture and having good working habits, this can reduce the risk of workplace injuries and have a positive impact on your physical and mental health.

If you feel that your workstation is a problem, discuss any issues you have with your manager or ask for help from your workplace health and safety officer, who may be able to help you identify a solution.

#### Recognising the warning signs and getting help

Work-related stress is experienced differently by each person but prolonged and severe stress can impair normal function.

Most of the time you can get help from your manager, your HR department or your EAP (Employee Assistance Program) provider. If you feel stress has been affecting your ability to carry out everyday activities for two weeks or more, you may need further help from your GP or a qualified mental health professional.

There are also 24-hour telephone support services such as Lifeline (13 11 14) and organisations such as beyondblue ([www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)) who may be able to help you.



## Looking after yourself

Managing your wellbeing outside the office can help increase your ability to manage stress in the office.

Ways to look after yourself include:

- **Getting active**  
Research has shown some exercise programs can help reduce anxiety. By improving your fitness, exercise may help to combat stress while keeping you in good physical shape and condition. Try a brisk walk for 30 minutes a day most days of the week by going for a walk or a run at lunchtime or joining a gym.
- **Eating a healthy, balanced diet**  
Generally, a diet that includes plenty of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, fish, lean meat and low-fat dairy products and is low in saturated and trans fats, salt and highly-processed foods can be one of your best tickets to good health.
- **Getting enough good quality sleep**  
Lack of sleep affects both our mental performance and our mood. On average, most adults need around 7-8 hours of sleep each night, though this amount can vary according to age and individual needs. Try to set a bedtime and stick to it.
- **Not smoking, and limiting the amount of caffeine you drink**  
Nicotine in cigarettes and caffeine in coffee, cola and energy drinks are stimulants that may increase your stress levels.
- **Being smart about how much alcohol you choose to drink**  
Alcohol may help you feel more relaxed at first, but long-term drinking to cope with stress can lead to a range of health and social problems, including negatively affecting how well you can do your work.


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## Further information

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 **Beyondblue**  
[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

