

Stress: The Inside Story

What happens to your body?

Your body's defenses against stress are amazingly complex. While you are probably aware of the tension stress causes in your back and head, there are many effects stress has on your body that slip by unnoticed. The physical and emotional symptoms of stress are very apparent. And internal reactions, although not as visible, are just as important.

Hectic Hormones

When the body faces a stressful event, your central nervous system alerts the hypothalamus. The hypothalamus then alerts the the pituitary gland which releases the hormone ACTH.

Kicking Adrenaline

Within two seconds, adrenaline and noradrenalin are released. The adrenaline rapidly prepares the body for stress by providing the a quick source of energy. When you start to feel hot and your heart begins to pound, you know the adrenaline has kicked in. All the while, seventeen other hormones are being released, sending the body into a hyperactive state. Within eight seconds, you feel a surge of energy. Sugars stored by the liver are being poured into the blood stream, providing fuel for quick energy. Red blood cells also enter the blood stream, allowing more oxygen to be carried to the brain and limbs.

Digestion Ceases

Even if you've just eaten a big meal, digestion stops. This allows the blood to be diverted to the brain and muscles. Instead of worrying about the food, your body wants to take care of the emergency.

Bowels Affected

The bowels and bladder may tighten up, obstructing normal bodily functions. On the other hand, the bowels may be released uncontrollably.

Return To Normal

Finally, after the situation passes, your body relaxes. This allows the body's system to be replenished.

Wow! And you thought you were just having a bad day.