

HEALTH IMPACTS SAFETY



- Chronic stress is a major contributor to hypertension, stroke, and heart disease
- Stress can increase your risk of having accidents at work

Safety Meeting Guide

TWH 8: What's stress got to do with it?

<http://ow.ly/iHa00>

INSTRUCTIONS: Hold the guide with this side facing you and the other side facing your committee. Then share the information on this page.

Today's safety committee meeting is about the impact of chronic or lasting high stress levels. Recently, an employee struggling with high job demands and an impending deadline had a heart attack while working late to finish a report that was due the next morning. His doctor had noted a spike in his blood pressure over the last several months since the new project had started.

Stress occurs when excessive demands result in physical and psychological strain. In addition to increasing the risk for hypertension, heart disease, and stroke, experiencing stress for prolonged periods can prevent you from engaging in healthy behaviors such as sleeping well, eating right, and getting exercise, and instead make you vulnerable to illness. Stress can also leave you distracted at work, thereby increasing your risk for having accidents on the job.



Here are some ways to alleviate stress:

- Recognize your signs of stress: e.g., not sleeping enough, smoking or drinking more, feeling tired all the time, or quick changes in your mood.
- Meet with your supervisor or team regularly to understand your job expectations, review safety and health practices, and reduce uncertainty, thus preventing stress.
- If you are a supervisor, consider ways of reducing work demands and increasing your employees' control over how or when they do their work.
- Understand and make use of the support resources for well-being that may be available to you at work, e.g., stress management, work-life balance, or diet/exercise programs.
- Explore ways to tackle your stress in healthy ways: Go for a walk, try some deep breathing or meditate, listen to music, exercise, talk through your problems with family, friends, or co-workers.
- Pause and prioritize: usually, not everything needs to be done right away.
- Focus on the tasks you have accomplished and give yourself credit for them.

ASK: "Does anyone have more ideas or comments to share?"
Pause for responses. Then, discuss ways to take action.

END WITH ACTION PLAN (ideas for what to ask or say)

- What are some common sources of stress at work?
- What are some strategies that help you effectively deal with stress?
- How can your organization help reduce your stress levels?
- What would you tell a co-worker who's experiencing chronic stress?