

# Stress management

## Learning objectives

This chapter covers the following:

- **what stress is**
- **environmental, emotional, chemical and nutritional stress**
- **the causes of stress**
- **the symptoms of stress**
- **the stress response**
- **how to reduce and/or manage stress**

Stress has been described as one of the most serious health problems of the twenty-first century. It is not necessarily a bad thing, despite its negative image, as stress can be positive as well as negative. Stress is an inescapable part of being human and is a normal response to challenge. The body is constantly trying to maintain internal stability and will do what it can to return to stability if that state is altered. This is called [homeostasis](#). If it's a very hot day, your body will cool itself by perspiring. To repair a cut, the body creates a scab, which helps heal the wound and protects the skin from further damage. If you eat foods that are acid-forming the body will take calcium from bones in order to neutralize the acid. Every minute of every day the body responds to stress with a complex series of biochemical changes that attempt to bring the body back into its pre-stressed state. However, this can be an uphill struggle for our systems if we continue to bombard ourselves with 'stress'. Stress comes in many guises – environmental, emotional, chemical and nutritional stress being the most widely researched. We talk about stress constantly, often referring to someone as 'stressed out' or 'burned out' but few people really understand the gravity of a highly stressed body. A life without any challenge, with too little to do and too much time, can be as great a source of stress as too much work and too many deadlines. So what exactly is stress and how can we manage it? This chapter will answer these questions for you.