

## What is stress?

Stress is a challenge, a task or a demand on a person. Stressors can be good or bad, short-term or constant, big or little. Stress makes us feel tense, overwhelmed, or worried. It might be that we don't have enough skills to deal with the stress. Stress can come from:

- medical and healthcare needs.
- people.
- school and work.
- life changes.
- death or loss of loved ones.
- and many other things.

Some stress is normal and can even be helpful sometimes. Too much stress can get in the way of life, lead to pain, or make pain problems worse. Learning how to manage stress and pain can help us do the important things in life.

## What happens to our bodies during stress?

The mind and body can work harder or more than usual because of stress. When responding to stress, we can get stuck in the “fight or flight” mode. This means our body is trying to help us survive or escape the stressors. This can result in:

- faster heart rate
- faster breathing
- feeling nervous, anxious, or cranky
- **having more pain**

## What is the connection to pain?

There is a strong connection between stress and pain. Pain can cause a lot of stress for kids and families, and stress can lead to more pain.

## What are the symptoms of stress?

- Problems with memory and concentrating.
- Having racing thoughts (this means random thoughts that switch from one thing to another quickly).
- Focusing on the negative.
- Feeling moody, cranky, tense, overwhelmed, lonely, or depressed.
- Sleeping too much or too little.
- Overreacting to things.
- Having problems with people in your life.

### What can I do for my child?

- Help your child stay active, eat regular meals, and get enough sleep. This is important for your whole family.
- Create and use regular and consistent routines to help reduce stress.
- Have your child meet with a therapist to help with stress.
- Notice the things that are stressful in your child's life. Remove or adjust the ones you can control.
- Support your child in learning coping skills.
- Take care of yourself as a parent or caregiver, too. If you are struggling, talk to your medical provider. Think about meeting with a therapist to help with your stress.
- Consider a visit to the Craig Yabuki Mental Health Walk-in Clinic:  
<https://childrenswi.org/location-directory/locations/urgent-care/craig-yabuki-mental-health-walk-in-clinic>

#### Child or Teen Mental Health Resources



#### Parent or Caregiver Mental Health Resources



**ALERT:** Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any concerns.

Jane B. Pettit Pain and Headache Center

Children's Hospital of Wisconsin

Ph: 414-266-2775

**For more health and wellness information check out this resource:**

<https://kidshealth.org/ChildrensWi/en/parents>

**This sheet was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.**