

WELLBEING

Stress Awareness Month 2019



According to a survey carried out by **Forth**, 85% of UK adults experience stress on a regular basis.

April marks the return of Stress Awareness Month - the wellbeing campaign aimed at raising awareness of stress and promoting stress free living.

What is stress?

Stress is our body's response to a harmful life event or threatening situation, regardless if the threat is genuine or not.

Stress can affect people in a variety of different ways and severities. What may be perceived as a stressful situation by one person, may be of little concern to another, and some individuals are better able to handle stress than others.

Not all stress is bad. In some cases, small amounts of stress can help you accomplish tasks. For example, feeling "butterflies" in your stomach before a job interview or an important presentation. These types of positive stressors are short-lived, and your body's way of helping you get through what could be a tough situation.

Our bodies are able to handle small amounts of stress. But, we are not equipped to handle long-term, chronic stress without ill consequences.

Signs of stress

Some of the common symptoms of stress to watch out for can be split into four areas: psychological, emotional,

physical and behavioural. The symptoms that affect you will often accumulate until you are forced to take notice of them, such as:

- Becoming easily agitated, frustrated, and moody.
- Experiencing chest pain and a rapid heartbeat.
- Being in a constant state of worry.
- An increased reliance on alcohol, smoking, caffeine or drug use.

Tips for reducing work-related stress

Be organised: Planning ahead to stay organised can greatly decrease stress at work. This can result in less time spent rushing in the morning to avoid being late and being more efficient with your work.

Walking lunches: One way you can help combat the effects of a sedentary lifestyle and de-stress is by taking a walk during your lunch break. This can help clear your mind, lift your mood and improve your fitness.

Eat well: Long working hours and heavy workloads can often create a vicious circle of not eating properly and skipping meals, resulting in you feeling sluggish and low. Eating well balanced meals will help you to keep healthy and maintain your energy for busy days at work.

Tips for reducing personal stress

Talk: Take time out to talk to someone with an empathetic ear and get their perspective on things. It could be a friend, a family member or a colleague. If you can talk to your manager about how you feel, they may be able to support you.

Exercise: Regular exercise can help lower stress and anxiety by releasing endorphins, as well as improving your sleep and self-esteem in the process.

Reduce your caffeine intake: High quantities of caffeine can increase stress and anxiety. However, people's sensitivity to caffeine can vary greatly. If you notice that caffeine makes you jittery or anxious, consider cutting back.

How to get involved

To help raise awareness of Stress Awareness Month, you can spread the word on social media by using the hashtag #StressAwarenessMonth.

Another way to help promote the event is by simply being more open with your friends and colleagues regarding stress. Share your coping mechanisms and try to act more considerately around people who appear to be stressed.

If you want to test your stress levels, [click here](#) to access the Stress Management Society's online stress guide.

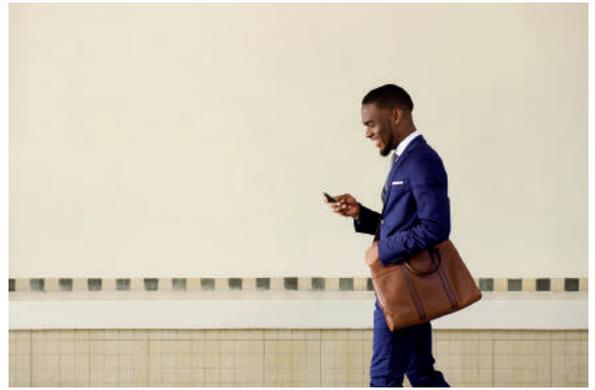
If you feel as though you have issues with your stress levels, or if you have any other wellbeing concerns, please call our helpline on: **0800 030 5182**

Or alternatively, visit our portal to view advice articles, webinars and 4-week programmes all aimed at improving your physical and mental wellbeing. www.healthassuredeap.com

TOPICAL

Walk to Work Day

Friday 5th April 2019



Detailed in the Department for Transport's 2017 **Walking and Cycling** report, just 11% of UK employees walk to work.

Held on the first Friday of every April, Walk to Work Day encourages us to leave the car keys at home and add more steps to our commute by walking to work.

The wellbeing day first began in the USA in 2004 before featuring on the UK wellbeing calendar. Now, employees across the country are being reminded of the physical and emotional health benefits of walking every year.

Benefits of walking:

Physical: Walking is a great way to improve or maintain your overall health. Just 30 minutes every day can increase cardiovascular fitness, strengthen bones, reduce excess body fat, and boost muscle power and endurance. It can also reduce your risk of developing conditions such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and some cancers.

Mental: Walking can instantly lift your mood — especially when you are outdoors. The activity boosts your body's endorphins which as a result, reduces stress levels and increases motivation.

Enhanced creativity: Whether you are stuck for ideas for an upcoming project, or can't find a solution to overcome an

obstacle in the workplace, walking has been proven to get the creative juices flowing. A study published in **Frontiers in Neuroscience** found that walking improved both convergent and divergent thinking, the two types associated with enhanced creativity.

Financial: As well as the various physical and mental benefits that come with walking, it can also save you money. Gym memberships and home exercise equipment can become quite costly, whereas walking won't cost you a penny.

How to get involved:

Getting involved with Walk to Work Day is easy. Below we have listed 5 simple steps for you to follow to help make your walk to work as successful as possible.

Step 1: Be prepared

Because you are making a change from your usual daily routine and commute, it would be wise to set your alarm early, pack your bag the night before and make sure you get plenty of sleep prior to taking part in Walk to Work Day.

Step 2: Plan your route

Make sure you plan the route you want to take before setting off. Consider timings, terrain and your personal safety. This will ensure that you arrive at work on time in a motivated and comfortable manner.

Step 3: Pick your footwear

Swap your work-shoes for a pair of comfy trainers or walking shoes to help make your journey as smooth as possible.

Step 4: Be realistic

If you don't live within a sensible walking distance to your workplace, then don't set yourself the task of walking the entire journey. Adjustments can be made for you to still take part in the wellbeing day, such as, taking public transport for a portion of the journey, or parking your car a sufficient distance away from your workplace, and walking the remainder.

Step 5: Check the weather

Make sure that you are fully prepared for what the weather has in store for Walk to Work Day. Pack a bag with waterproofs or an umbrella for any weather-related emergencies.

Spread the word:

In the lead up to your journey, help raise awareness of the wellbeing event by using the hashtag #WalktoWorkDay on social media.

You could also track your progress via a step counting app and share your results with your friends, family and colleagues. Why not make it a friendly competition to see who can total the most steps or calories burnt?

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LEGAL

Caring for Someone – Support and Benefits



Being a carer for a loved one can be an extremely rewarding role but can also impact the carer physically, emotionally and financially.

Carers often put another's needs before their own and the role itself can be extremely demanding. Being a carer can gradually impact many aspects of an individual's life including their physical and mental health, career, relationships and social life. Self-care and awareness of the available support is therefore important to ensure a carer looks after their own wellbeing.

Financial Support

Financial support may be available to those who care for another. The first step towards understanding whether financial support is available from the council is to arrange for a Carer's Assessment to be completed. A Carer's Assessment will consider the level of care required for the individual that needs support and how this impacts the carer. The council will then provide information on the support options and financial benefits available.

Carer's Allowance is the main welfare benefit available to financially support carers. Carers Allowance is currently £64.60 per week (April 2018-2019) and is available to those who are:

- Aged 16 or above;
- Care for a disabled person for at least 35 hours per week;

- Care for someone who receives a qualifying disability benefit;
- Earn's less than £120 per week (after deductions) and are not in full-time education.

Visit [GOV UK](#) to find out more about Carers Allowance and how to claim. If Carer's Allowance is not available, a carer might still be eligible for other benefits.

Online calculators can be used to determine if any other benefits are available, such as, the [Turn 2 Us](#) and [Age UK Benefits Calculator](#).

Northern Ireland

The rules are slightly different in Northern Ireland. Carer's Allowance may be available to those aged 16 or over and spend at least 35 hours a week caring for someone who is ill or has a disability. To be eligible for Carer's Allowance, both the carer and the looked after person must meet certain criteria. Find out more here: [NI Direct](#).

Ireland

The rules vary further in Ireland. Carer's Allowance is means tested in Ireland which involves assessing income, occupational pensions and maintenance payments. It is mainly paid to carers on low incomes, who look after people with certain care needs. The rate of Carer's Allowance can vary. For more information and to apply visit: [Citizens Information](#).

Emotional Support

Caring for someone can be an

extremely challenging and demanding job. It is important that carers look after their own wellbeing and consider accessing support from friends, family and their GP.

Many charities provide lots of useful online resources that can be accessed at any time, such as advice articles and forums. Local support groups and networks enable carers to talk to others in similar situation to themselves and share experiences through support and social activities. See [Age UK](#), [Carers UK](#) and the [Alzheimer's Society](#) for more information.

Taking breaks from time to time is also extremely important as being a carer can be exhausting. Respite provides a break for carers, allowing the opportunity to take some much needed rest. Respite can be arranged informally, by asking friends and family for support, or by contacting local respite centres.

Contact your local council, [Carers Trust](#) or Carers UK for more information about local respite options.

If you feel as though you need further assistance with any of the topics mentioned in this guidance, please call our helpline on: [0800 030 5182](tel:0800 030 5182)

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