

Year end stress in the workplace

SADJ November 2022, Vol. 77 No. 10 p586

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Stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension. It can come from any event or thought that makes a person feel frustrated, angry, or nervous. Stress is the body's reaction to a challenge or demand. In short spurts, stress can be positive, such as when it helps you avoid danger or meet a deadline.

Between the upcoming holiday season and the end-of-year push at work, your organization may see rising stress levels among employees. This stress can have major impacts on individual, team and business performance. With learners and students also writing their exams, they may also experience some of the stress symptoms. Stress can affect anybody and as such the advice can be given to patients, staff or used by the clinicians themselves

Effects of stress

You may be aware of the physical and emotional symptoms of stress such as headaches, stomach aches, and anxiety. Stress can manifest in several problems at work, including lower productivity and morale and higher absenteeism and turnover.

Classic signs of stress in adults may include:

- Crying spells or bursts of anger.
- Difficulty eating.
- Losing interest in daily activities.
- Increasing physical distress symptoms such as headaches or stomach pains.
- Fatigue.
- Feeling guilty, helpless, or hopeless.
- Avoiding family and friends.

Effects of stress in the Orofacial region

Jaw issues, or disorders of the temporomandibular joint (TMJ) or chewing muscles - these can cause pain around the ear or face.

Teeth grinding, or bruxism - this can happen during the day, especially when you're concentrating, or at night. Poor oral hygiene, caused by a lack of good brushing and flossing. If you're too busy or forget to keep up with your dental hygiene, you can wind up with tooth decay and gum disease.

Aphthous ulcers (Cracker sores), which can be triggered by vitamin B deficiency and any type of mouth injury or irritation. Several studies now show that stress is another big trigger for canker sores.¹

Oral infections or sores, which may show up as ulcers, white lines, or white or red spots. These can be brought on by stress.

The role of the dentist in assisting patients to cope with stress

- Patients should talk to their dentist about treatment options. The dentist might do or advise on the below:
- Address teeth grinding by making a custom-fitted night guard. It can be worn at night to prevent tooth damage caused from grinding and clenching. The night guard also creates a cushion to remove stress on your aching muscles and joint tissues.
- Advise the patient to avoid hard or crunchy foods when they're in pain.
- Avoid coping with tobacco and alcohol because these products can may worsen the oral symptoms.
- Advise to manage pain through gentle massage, physical therapy or pain relief medications.
- Prescribe anti-inflammatory drugs that will help reduce inflammation of the (TMJ). Antiviral drugs may be given to prevent the development of cold sores.
- Advise patient to avoid the sun or use a sunscreen with at least an SPF of 30 to help reduce cold sores.
- This is an important reminder to members to be on the lookout for some of the stress symptoms in their patients so that they are able to advise on management or referring accordingly.

CPD questionnaire on page 638



The Continuous Professional Development (CPD) section provides for twenty general questions and five ethics questions. The section provides members with a valuable source of CPD points whilst also achieving the objective of CPD, to assure continuing education. The importance of continuing professional development should not be underestimated, it is a career-long obligation for practicing professionals.