

Stress is an a coping mechanism, and enables the body to respond to different situations and stimuli. This response allows to maintain an equilibrium between the body and mind.

**When stress becomes chronic, this balance is lost.**

## Warning signs of chronic stress

### Physical symptoms

- Pains and Aches (headaches, colic, muscles and joints)
- Sleeping Troubles
- Digestives disorders
- Unusual sweating
- Rapide heartbeat...

### Behavioral symptoms

- Eating less or more
- Isolating yourself from others
- Emotional symptoms (tensions, anxiety, agitation, irritability, short temper, sadness, crying easily, moodiness).
- Misuse of alcohol
- Misuse of cigarettes
- Misuse of drugs...

### Cognitive symptoms

- Inability to concentrate
- Memory problems
- Difficulties to take initiatives

### Long term consequences:

Decreased immunity, skin conditions, heart disease (cardiovascular).

# Stress and psycho-social risks: Act to prevent them!

**Psychosocial disorders** are the second biggest health issue at work after musculoskeletal problems. (Survey of the European foundation for the improvement of working conditions, 2005)

**The resulting stress** is a multifactorial phenomenon that remains hard to identify and that is felt by each person in a different way.

**Excess stress** can cause emotional, physical and intellectual disorders.

**Today, April 18th 2013,**  
**World Day for Health and Safety at Work,** the CERN Safety and Health teams are here to inform you about this issue!

### Did you know ?

Stress is a body's normal response to a challenge and is often beneficial. However, stress which is intense and repetitive becomes harmful and chronic.



## Definition of Stress

According to the European Agency for Health and Safety at Work, « People experience stress when they perceive that there is an imbalance between the demands made on them and the resources they have available to cope with those demands ».

Les risques psychosociaux peuvent être d'ordre:

- **Professional factors** (work load, interprofessional relations, work environment...)
- **Personal factors** (relations with family, disease, money...)

In Europe, around 20% of employees feel that their health is affected by workplace stress.

## Stress mechanisms in 3 stages



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### 1. Fight or flight

In stressful situations, the body releases hormones (such as adrenaline). These increase body temperature, blood pressure and heart rate, delivering more oxygen to the heart and muscles. We are fully alert and ready to fight or run!

### 2. Resistance

The body produces new hormones : these increase blood sugar levels, bringing more energy to the brain, heart and muscles. This mechanism allows the body to sustain stress during a longer period.

### 3. Exhaustion

If the stressful situation does not stop or if the level of stress increases, there will be a decrease in mental and physical capabilities : this is chronic stress. In order to cope with the situation, the body produces yet more hormones. It is permanently activated and exhausts itself.