

Stress

What is stress?

Stress is the body's natural response to situations that challenge us. In the university setting, this can include academic pressures, deadlines, financial concerns, social expectations, or navigating future career decisions. Stress triggers the "fight or flight" response—an instinct that helps us react quickly to challenges.

Although stress often feels negative, it can play a helpful role. In moderate amounts, stress can boost focus, energy, and motivation—helping students stay alert during exams or push through a tough assignment. But when stress becomes persistent or overwhelming, it can harm your health, well-being, and academic performance.

Key facts about student stress

- Around **75% of individuals** report that stress negatively affects their physical health.
- Nearly **half of people** experiencing stress do **not seek help**.
- **Financial strain**, including tuition, living expenses, and student debt, remains a top cause of stress for university students.
- Stress can affect **your body, mind, emotions, and behavior**—and it doesn't look the same for everyone.

What causes stress in University Life?

Stress in student life can arise from many sources. Academic workload, pressure to succeed, balancing part-time jobs, adapting to independent living, and managing relationships are just a few. Stress can stem from both **positive events** (like graduation or moving to a new city) and **difficult ones** (such as illness, family conflict, or personal loss).

It's also influenced by how we **perceive and respond** to these situations, our expectations of ourselves, fear of failure, or comparing ourselves to others can all make stress feel more intense.

Common Signs and symptoms

Everyone experiences stress differently, but some common indicators include:

- Difficulty falling asleep and/or staying asleep.
- Changes in appetite or eating habits.
- Feeling tired, nauseous, or having headaches.
- Trouble concentrating, remembering things, or staying organized.
- Feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or irritable
- Avoiding assignments or procrastinating
- Using alcohol, tobacco, or other substances to cope

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Managing Stress in a Healthy Way

Recognizing and managing stress early can make a big difference. Here are practical strategies that can help you take control:

- **Understand your stress:** Learn what stress looks like to you, what triggers it, and how your body and mind react. Self-awareness is the first step toward managing it.
- **Notice the warning signs:** Track changes in your mood, sleep, or habits. Pay attention to key stressors like exams, deadlines, or conflicts.
- **Support your body:** Eat nutritious meals, stay physically active, and get regular sleep. These habits provide a strong foundation for managing stress.
- **Limit or Avoid substances:** Be mindful of alcohol, caffeine, or drug use. These may offer temporary relief but often worsen stress over time
- **Practice relaxation strategies:** Incorporate breathing exercises, nature walks, mindfulness, reading, or other calming activities into your day.
- **Manage your time:** Use planners or digital tools to stay organized. Break tasks into smaller steps, set priorities, and don't overcommit. It's okay to say no.
- **Connect with Others:** Spending time with supportive friends, classmates, or family can boost your mood and ease stress.
- **Reach out for help:** If stress feels too heavy to manage alone, talk to someone, a counselor, academic advisor, or a trusted peer. Seeking help is a strength, not a weakness.

Stress happens but you don't have to face it alone. Reach out TELUS Health Student Support or to your university's wellbeing services. Taking care of yourself is part of student success.

Let us help you thrive.

The TELUS Health Student Support team is here for you. Explore helpful resources on the TELUS Health Student Support app, and if you're looking for stress management strategies, feel free to reach out to help 24/7.

Contact us anytime—you're not alone.

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