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Are you secretly battling stress?

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Feeling stressed may be an inherent part of 21st-century living but that doesn't mean we are opening up about what it is doing to us. A new study released by mental heath charity Mind in November 2010 found that 93% of employees who are absent from work due to stress give other reasons why they are taking time off claiming illnesses like flu instead. The irony is stress does take a toll and can mimic other illnesses – so you might not realise stress is the cause.

Dr Malcolm Vandenburg (<u>www.malcolmvandenburg.co.uk/</u>) – author of *Positive Under Pressure* book - explains how to tell if your body is suffering under stress.



SKIN BREAKOUTS

The body releases more histamine under stress, which can trigger skin conditions such as eczema and alopecia. Blotchiness, redness and very dry skin are also common stress signs.

NUMB TOES AND FINGERS

Neurones in the brain become hyper-excited when stressed causing numbness and tingling. Over-tensing muscles also results in cramp.





MEMORY LOSS

Struggling to remember what you had for dinner last night? Blame stress. A hormonal imbalance of serotonin, dopamine and adrenaline caused by anxiety can destabilise the brain leading to memory loss.

TWITCHY EYES

The nervous system goes into overdrive and muscles in the eye become over-stimulated thanks to a surge of adrenaline prompting blurry eyesight and twitching.





WEIGHT GAIN

It's true: stress can make you fat. Steroids become suppressed in the immune system and concentrated around the abdomen encouraging fat storage.

ABDOMINAL PAIN

The bowel becomes dry leading to heartburn, abdominal pain and IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome). A dry mouth and frequent trips to the toilet can be milder side effects.

