



National University
Hospital

Are you just tired, or is there something more?

Swipe to learn what chronic stress does to the body and when to take exhaustion seriously.



Why does exhaustion feel so “normal”?



One in four young adults in Singapore reported poor mental health – the highest proportion among all age groups (National Population Health Survey 2023–2024).

Constant notifications, social comparison, and poor sleep leave the brain in a state of low-grade alertness. Over time, fatigue stops feeling like a signal and starts feeling like the baseline.





What is **chronic stress** actually doing inside my body?



Even in someone who looks healthy, prolonged stress can cause a subtle but sustained rise in heart rate and blood pressure, reduced heart rate variability – a marker of how well your body balances stress and recovery – as well as insulin resistance, which affects how your body regulates energy and weight.


It also disrupts immune function, increasing susceptibility to infections and sustaining low-grade inflammation.

These changes happen at a hormonal and cellular level. **They won't show up in the mirror, but they are happening.**





How do I know it's affecting me?



Waking unrefreshed, even after getting the recommended hours of sleep

Persistent brain fog or difficulty concentrating

Frequent minor illnesses

Increased irritability or lower stress tolerance

Feeling mentally stuck, or losing interest in things that used to be enjoyable



If these persist or start affecting your work, relationships, or ability to enjoy ordinary life, it may be **time to seek support.**





What **can I do** about it?



Start with sleep. It supports cognitive function, emotional regulation, metabolism, and immune health – it underlies almost every other system in the body.



Check in with yourself regularly. Set realistic limits. Seek support from professionals before exhaustion escalates.



Practise self-compassion. Treat your own wellbeing with the same care you'd offer a close friend. It has real consequences for how the body recovers.





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