

What is stress and what can you do about it?

Information about mental health
for labour migrants



What is stress?

When you are working in a different country, you've left family and friends behind. There may be things that you find difficult in the Netherlands. You might also be worried about your job, future or family. All of these things can cause stress.

There is nothing unusual about that. Often, your stress will simply go away after a while. Sometimes, you need help from other people before you feel better. It is not something you should feel ashamed about. The information in this leaflet is about stress.

Symptoms that come with stress

The symptoms may differ from person to person. Examples of symptoms include:



Negative thoughts
or worrying



Poor sleep or
feeling tired



Feeling scared
or panicking



Drinking a lot of alcohol
or using drugs



Negative emotions
or a lack of hope
for the future



Pain in your body



Overeating or eating little



Feeling dizzy



Getting angry quickly

Słavek's story

Słavek (34) comes from Poland. He came to the Netherlands for work eight years ago. Two years ago, his wife and daughter also came to the Netherlands.

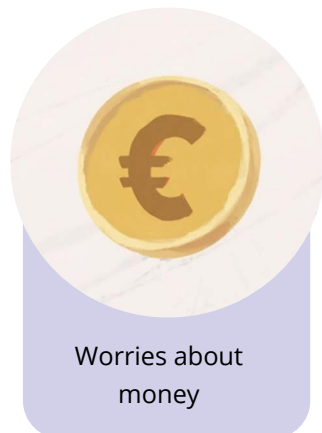
In the Netherlands, he thought: 'I can build a future for my family here'. Słavek feels good for the first few years. He used to operate a forklift truck in a large warehouse. He is now the team leader there. He is renting his own flat. In recent weeks, Słavek has had difficulty sleeping. He is very stressed. He is drinking a few beers after a long working day more often. The long working days mean that he spends little time at home. He is arguing more and more with his wife about unpaid bills. He is also worried about his daughter's future. How will he ever be able to pay for her studies?

Causes of stress

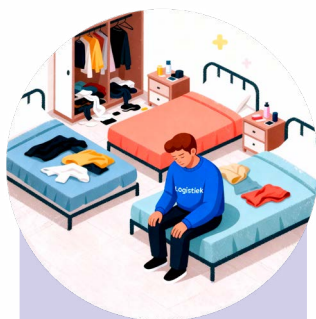
Stress differs from person to person. There are lots of things that can cause you to feel stressed. It is entirely normal that these things leave you feeling stressed. Here are a few examples:



Worries about your job or contract



Worries about money



Worries about your
living situation



Missing family
and friends



Having no
free time



Discrimination or
bullying in the
workplace



Struggling to
learn Dutch



Worries about family
or friends in your
country of birth



Feeling alone or
not at home



Doing heavy
physical work

What can you do to reduce your stress?

The things that help reduce stress may differ from person to person. Below are some examples of things that can help you relax:



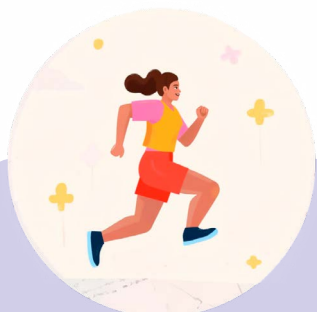
Talking to someone you trust



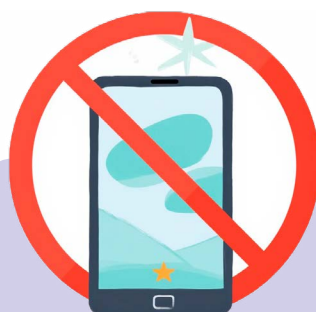
Try to eat, sleep and get up at the same time every day



Going outside



Exercising or doing sports



Reducing your screen time



Doing things
to relax



Your faith

What is Sławek doing himself?

Sławek starts feeling worse. He decides to go see his family doctor. The family doctor explains that his symptoms are caused by stress.

The family doctor advises Sławek to drink less alcohol and to exercise more. Sławek follows this advice. The family doctor also refers Sławek to social services. Here he receives help with his financial situation. The arguments at home continue. He also spends a lot of time thinking about his ill mother in Poland. Sławek is doing a little better now, but he still does not feel well.

Ask for help if your symptoms are not going away

Sometimes, you will not be able to resolve stress on your own. This can make you feel ill. You might notice aches and pains in your body or head. Lots of people go through this. It is nothing to feel ashamed about. If you have lived through lots of difficult things, your body and mind may respond this way.

Go and see your family doctor if your symptoms don't get better within a few weeks. Your family doctor can help with symptoms caused by stress. The family doctor will listen to you and ask questions about your life. Sometimes, your family doctor will prescribe some medicine.

In most cases, your family doctor will be working with a mental health practitioner. That person is also referred to as a POH-GGZ. The mental health practitioner knows a lot about mental health and will discuss possible solutions with you.

If you often think about death

When your stress becomes too much, you might start feeling anxious and extremely down. Sometimes, you might feel like you no longer want to live. If you often think about death or wish that you didn't have to wake up in the morning, remember that these feelings are human. One place you can reach out to is 'Stichting 113'. This is an organisation that helps people who often think about death. You can contact Stichting 113 to have a chat or talk to a care provider at any time. You can do so in Dutch or in English. Take a look at www.113.nl for more information.

If you often think about death, you can also talk to your family doctor.

Referral to GGZ

Sometimes, your problems may be too big for the family doctor and the mental health practitioner. If so, they will make sure you can go see someone in GGZ. This is called a referral. GGZ is the Dutch for mental health services. GGZ can also help with addiction, for example.

If your family doctor refers you to GGZ, someone from GGZ will contact you to make an appointment. During your first few appointments, your care provider will get to know you better and listen to your problems. You will also talk about what type of treatment will best suit you.

It's good to ask for help

You are likely to have been through lots of difficult situations. Pressure of work and the place where you live may be asking a lot of you. It is understandable that this is stressing you. You do not need to deal with this alone. Asking for help is completely normal. In fact, it is a sign of strength.

Whatever you discuss always stays private

All care providers are sworn to professional secrecy. This means that anything you share will stay private. That's what the law says. Your care providers need to ask for your permission first before discussing your problems with someone else.

Słavek finds help

The arguments and worries about his mother are making Słavek very tired. He has less and less energy. Słavek has lost any interest in doing things and feels anxious and sad. He decides to go back to his family doctor and ask for help.

The family doctor refers him to the mental health practitioner. He finds the courage to be honest with the mental health practitioner about how he feels. After a few conversations with the mental health practitioner, it is clear that Słavek needs more help. The mental health practitioner refers him to GGZ, where a psychologist tells Słavek that he has depression. Słavek starts group therapy. This makes him feel supported. He is also given some pills to help him sleep better. Slowly, he starts to feel a little better.

What about the costs?

Support from your family doctor is free. Your health insurance covers any fees for this. If you are given medicines, you will sometimes need to pay for them. If you are referred to GGZ, there is an amount you will have to pay yourself. This is called 'eigen risico' ('excess' in English). Any GGZ support on top of 'eigen risico' will be covered by your health insurance. If you have any questions about healthcare costs, contact your health insurer.

Interpreters

If your Dutch isn't good enough yet, your care providers can arrange an interpreter for you. You do not have to arrange this yourself. You do not need to pay for an interpreter yourself either. An interpreter can join you during your conversation or help you over the telephone. The interpreter is also not allowed to tell anyone what you discussed.

Other translated information

In this overview, you will find further simple [information and videos](#) about stress and health that have been translated.



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