

What Is Toxic Stress?



Everyone feels stress!

And not all stress is bad. Stress can help you see what is wrong. But too much of the wrong kind of stress can be unhealthy. For children, this kind of stress can change the way their bodies grow. Because of this, it is good to know a little more about stress and how it can change the body.



Positive stress response:

This is how the body feels about temporary stress. Stress can help the body do what is needed in the moment. Once the moment passes, this stress response turns off. .



Tolerable stress response:

This is how the body feels about more serious stress like getting hurt. With support in place, the body can more easily return to its normal state.



Toxic stress response:

This is how the body feels about more serious stress, without enough support from a caregiver. When a child does not get the help he needs, his body cannot turn off the stress easily. This lasting stress can cause lifelong health problems.

How does toxic stress affect children's bodies?



The brain:

Stress can make it harder for children to sit still, pay attention, and remember rules.



Immunity:

Stress can make it harder for bodies to fight off illness. For example, children may have colds and ear infections more often, or conditions like eczema or asthma.



The heart:

Stress can increase the chance of getting high blood pressure, which can lead to heart disease, stroke, and other serious health issues later in life.



Hormones and development:

Toxic stress can impact growth. It can also lead to obesity and changes in the timing of puberty.

How can adults protect children from toxic stress?

When caregivers consistently care for children and offer support, they feel safe. This feeling of safety is good for their minds and bodies. Other changes for your child include eating healthy food, getting regular exercise, and getting a good night's sleep. These changes can help lower stress and lead to lasting good health.



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