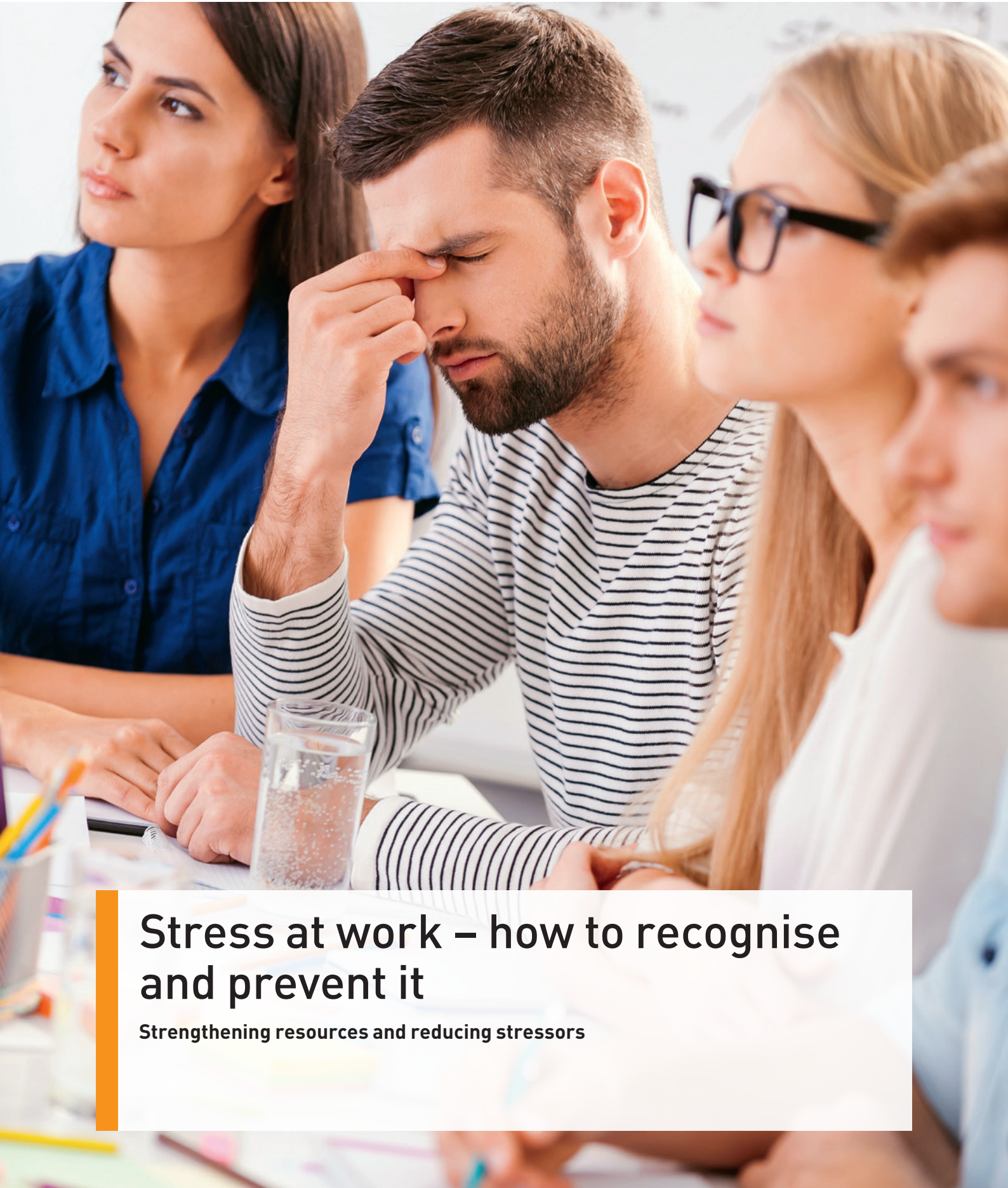


November 2019



Stress at work – how to recognise and prevent it

Strengthening resources and reducing stressors

1 Stress at work: what is it?

The following situations may create stress in your day-to-day work:

- Excessive targets and demands as well as time pressure
- Removal of boundaries between private and professional life
- Unclear or contradictory orders and unclear responsibilities and roles
- Lack of or inconvenient work equipment/ environmental conditions
- Work interruptions
- Lack of scope for action
- Lack of appreciation
- Conflicts with or lack of support from colleagues and line managers
- Lack of communication or information
- Job insecurity
- Impairment of personal integrity (bullying, sexual harassment, etc.)

According to the Federal Statistical Office (Bundesamt für Statistik), in 2017 more than half of all employees were faced with at least three of these risk factors. When these employees also experience a lack of options (resources) for reacting appropriately to these factors, this can cause an imbalance over the long run. Around 25% of the Swiss population are affected by this: they have more stressors than resources (see Job Stress Index 2018).

1.1 The impact of stress

Recovery has a significant effect on the mental and physical health of employees. If there is not enough recovery during periods with increased stressors, affected individuals experience a constant state of tension which, if it persists, can lead to exhaustion. And individuals who are exhausted have an increased risk of illness. The physical effects of persistent stress include irritability, loss of interest, lack of energy, depression, fatigue and burnout. Physical symptoms can also include muscle and joint pain, shoulder and back pain, cardiovascular disorders and gastrointestinal complaints.

Job satisfaction, motivation and performance also suffer when employees experience extended periods of stress. This can lead to a rise in the error rate and increased accidents, among other things. More-



Source: Job Stress Index 2018

over, a person's own health behaviour frequently worsens in situations of prolonged stress: healthy eating is neglected while the consumption of alcohol and nicotine increases.

Further information and offers

- [“Early recognition of exhaustion – preventing burnout”](#) brochure, Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), 2015
- [“Protecting against psychosocial risks in the workplace – information for employers”](#) brochure, Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), 2016
- [“Job Stress Index 2018”](#) factsheet, Health Promotion Switzerland
- [“Friendly Work Space Job-Stress-Analysis”](#) online survey, Health Promotion Switzerland
- Quick check for signs of stress, stressnostress.ch

2 Stress at work: how can you recognise it?

In order to be better equipped to handle stressful situations, stressors and personal resources must be analysed. Here you can find two approaches that enable such an analysis to better assess the current situation.

2.1 Friendly Work Space Job-Stress-Analysis

This offer for companies consists of an online survey that provides you with a detailed overview of the stress level within your organisation with very little effort. The subjectively perceived stressors and resources and the current well-being of employees are depicted in automatically generated reports at team, department and company level.

In addition to an analysis at organisational level, the survey also provides specific tips for each employee. Take the test – anonymously, of course – and find out your own stress level. More information and access to the test: www.fws-jobstressanalysis.ch.

2.2 “Stress no Stress” quick check

This scientifically based offer was developed by the organisation stressnostress.ch and enables individuals to assess their personal situation. They learn more about their current stress levels at work and potential sources of stress. The results help individuals better understand stress, identify signs of stress and take targeted measures to reduce stress. Further information: www.stressnostress.ch.

3 Stress at work: what can you do about it?

3.1 What employees can do

There is a wide range of courses throughout Switzerland that teach techniques and strategies for handling stress better. If the stressors mainly occur at work, it is recommended that employees speak to their line managers and colleagues.

If this is difficult, the human resources (HR) department or the employee committee are also good places to start.

Additional information

- [“Stress – we’ve got something for you”](#), Suva brochure, 1998
- [“Reducing stressors and building up resources”](#), checklist to draw up a status report from the WHM Forum of Eastern Switzerland, 2009
- [Ten steps towards your mental health](#), practical everyday tips, Health Promotion Switzerland, 2017
- stressnostress.ch, website with information about the topic of stress

3.2 What employers can do

The important thing in this regard is the awareness that stress reduction measures contribute to a company’s success. According to the Job Stress Index 2018, Swiss companies incur more than CHF 6.5 billion a year in productivity losses due to stress. These productivity losses can be permanently reduced with suitable information and preventive measures. The following contains information about managing psychosocial risks and establishing systematic workplace health management (WHM). Further important information can be found at <https://health-promotion.ch/workplace-health-management.html>.

Additional information

- Training course on [“Stress/Burnout: Recognising Staff Absences Early”](#)
- [FWS Check from Health Promotion Switzerland](#), simple online test to determine the status of WHM in your company
- [WHM criteria from Health Promotion Switzerland](#), quality criteria for WHM
- [“Protecting against psychosocial risks in the workplace”](#), SECO checklist for reviewing the key factors to protect against psychosocial risks within a company

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