

# Psychological impacts of workplace stress

Changes to our environment can often bring unique challenges to the workplace. This is particularly true for front-line workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, workers have faced increased emotional stressors and exhaustion. Experiencing excessive or unusual stressors at work, whether they occur over time or as one significant stressor event, can lead to a psychological injury.

Common signs of chronic or workload stress (also commonly referred to as “burnout”) may include:

Mood	Work/ attitude	Engagement/ performance	Physical	Substances
Loss of enthusiasm/ joy	Increased sick days	Decreased activity/ socializing	Fatigue	Increase in alcohol/drug use
Negative feelings	Decreased productivity or loss of focus on tasks	Strained relationships with peers	Weight loss/gain	
Irritable/ impatient/ nervous	Increase in errors	Procrastination	Lack of energy	

If you are noticing any of the above signs of chronic stress in your worker, the key is early intervention. By guiding them toward the appropriate resources available to them, you can help your worker avoid a more complex psychological injury.

Here are some suggestions for how to support your worker:

- In a supportive manner, talk about the changes you have noticed in their behaviours. Express your concern.
- Ask how they are sleeping, eating and feeling as these are often key indicators of when someone is struggling.
- If applicable, recommend reaching out to your employee assistance program (EAP) program or let them know what services they may be able to access through their extended health benefits.
- Refer them to a peer support program or your HR specialist who might be able to offer support.

## When exploring the option of accessing supports for your worker, you may consider asking them the following questions to determine if WCB should be involved:

- Is there a specific work-related event that impacted your mental health?
- Did your duties, hours or environment at work change significantly recently and do you feel this contributed to a decline in your mental health? If so, what specific work changes were most difficult to handle?
- Does your doctor recommend time away from work or a change at work?

Please refer to our [psychological injury webpage](#) and [Policy 03-01](#) for additional details regarding psychological injuries.

