



Signs and Signals of a Stress Reaction

Stress reactions to critical incidents can appear immediately or months later. They can last a few days or much longer. According to Westshore CIRS, common signs and signals of a stress reaction to watch out for include:

Physical	Emotional	Cognitive	Behavioral
Chest pain*	Agitation	Concentration or memory problems	Antisocial acts or changes to behavior in public
Difficulty breathing*	Anxiety	Confusion	Appetite changes
Rapid heart rate*	Apprehension	Difficulty identifying familiar objects or people	Change in sexual functioning
Shock symptoms*	Denial	Difficulty with abstract thinking	Change in speech patterns or communication skills
Chills	Depression	Disturbed thinking	Emotional outbursts
Dizziness	Emotional shock	Heightened or lowered alertness	Erratic movements
Elevated blood pressure	Fear	Hypervigilance	Hyperalertness to certain environments
Fainting	Feeling overwhelmed	Increased or decreased awareness of surroundings	Inability to rest
Fatigue	Grief	Intrusive images	New or increased alcohol consumption
Grinding of teeth	Guilt	Loss of time, place, person or orientation	Nonspecific bodily complaints
Headaches	Inappropriate emotional response	Poor attention	Pacing
Muscle tremors	Intense anger	Poor decision-making or problem-solving	Startle reflex
Nausea	Loss of emotional control		Suspiciousness
Profuse sweating	Severe panic (rare)		Withdrawal
Thirst	Uncertainty		
Twitches			
Visual difficulties			
Vomiting			
Weakness			

** Use this chart to check in on your own stress and to identify similar reactions in patients. Don't ignore persistent or intense symptoms. Follow up with medical care.*