

- Job stress / Burn Out (Psychology)

Beware of burnout

Tips on how to deal with exhaustion at work

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Burnout at work is a common phenomenon, and South Africa is particularly known for its workaholic mentality.



That’s the view of Murray Hewlett, chief executive officer of Affinity Health, who said that “high demands, tight deadlines, and long hours — all while juggling family responsibilities, can take a toll on even the most resilient individuals.”

Hewlett said that it is important for people to understand exactly what burnout is, how to recognise its signs and symptoms and to know how to deal with it.

“Burnout is a condition induced by long-term stress or dissatisfaction at work,” he said.

“It’s more than just having a bad day or a busy week; it’s a chronic condition that results from being overwhelmed and overworked over an extended period.

“A recent study by the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (Sadag) revealed that approximately one-third of South African workers experience burnout. This study underscores the widespread occurrence of burnout within the corporate landscape of South Africa.”

Recognising burnout is the first step towards addressing it.

Common signs and symptoms include: chronic fatigue and lack of energy, insomnia, irritability or impatience with co-workers or clients, lack of motivation or interest in work, feelings of disillusionment about your job, frequent headaches or muscle pain, changes in appetite or sleep habits, and decreased satisfaction and sense of accomplishment.

The causes of burnout vary, but they are often interrelated. They can include: excessive workload or overtime, a lack of control over work activities, insufficient rewards for effort, lack of a supportive community at work, unfair treatment or discrimination, and a mismatch between job and personal skills or values.

HOW CAN YOU DEAL WITH BURNOUT AT WORK?

Firstly, it is important to acknowledge that you’re experiencing burnout. Denial only prolongs the problem.

You then need to discuss your concerns with your supervisor to make changes to a demanding workload, gain more control over your tasks, or get involved in more rewarding

projects. It's also important to seek support, whether this is from co-workers, friends, family, or professionals.

You also need to prioritise your health by getting enough sleep, eating well, exercising, and engaging in activities that relax and rejuvenate you.

Another key step to recovering from burnout is to avoid taking on additional responsibilities and to set clear boundaries between your work and personal life to ensure downtime and recovery.

If burnout seems inevitable, take a break from work. If you cannot take days off work, don't allow work to consume your life after hours.

Turn off your phone when you get home and resist the urge to check your emails.

Don't try to do everything yourself. While asking for help with tasks may not come easily, delegating can help reduce your workload and stress levels.

Concentrate on the aspects of your job that you can control, such as your reaction to problems and how you manage your time.

Find value in your role by focusing on the aspects of the job that you enjoy or find meaningful, even if they're small parts of your day.

Finally, consider what's truly important

Burnout can also take its toll on resilient individuals. to you and whether your current job aligns with those values. Sometimes, a career change might be necessary to find more fulfilling work.

"Remember, it's essential to prioritise your well-being, not just for your sake but for your colleagues, friends, and family who rely on you," said Hewlett.

"If you're struggling with burnout, consider contacting a mental health professional who can provide personalised strategies and support to help you navigate this challenging period," he added. — Affinity Health.

A new study has revealed that the world is witnessing a significant surge in the incidence of strokes.

Published in the *Lancet*¹, the study cited neurological conditions, like stroke, migraine, Alzheimer's disease and dementia, as the leading cause of ill health and disability worldwide.

Stroke represents the most significant health challenge in terms of disease burden, leading to a substantial loss of healthy life years.

Not only does stroke profoundly affect individuals and their families, but it also imposes a considerable financial burden on society.

According to the World Stroke Organisation (WSO), the estimated global cost of stroke alone is over \$721 billion (0,66% of the global GDP).

From 1990 to 2019, the burden (in terms of the absolute number of cases) increased substantially (70% increase in incident strokes, 43% deaths from stroke, 102% prevalent strokes and 143% disability-adjusted life-years lost — DALYs), with the bulk of the global

stroke burden (86% of deaths and 89% of DALYs) residing in lower-income and lower-middle-income countries (LMIC).

The rise in stroke cases has prompted health experts to delve deeper into the underlying factors driving this alarming trend and to educate the public on effective strategies to reduce their risk of suffering from this debilitating condition.

Ryan Snodgrass, cardiovascular category manager for Pharma Dynamics, says several factors contribute to the increasing incidence of strokes on a global scale.

“One of the primary culprits is the rising prevalence of non-communicable diseases, such as hypertension, diabetes and obesity,” he said.

“These conditions, often exacerbated by sedentary lifestyles and poor dietary habits, significantly elevate an individual's risk of experiencing a stroke.

“Another factor is the aging population demographics in many countries, which play a pivotal role in the uptick of stroke cases.

“As life expectancy increases and medical advancements allow people to live longer, the likelihood of age-related health issues, including strokes, also rises.

“Socioeconomic disparities and unequal access to healthcare also exacerbate the stroke burden in low and middle-income countries, like South Africa.

“Limited resources and inadequate infrastructure hinder timely diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation efforts, leaving many individuals vulnerable to the devastating consequences of strokes.”

Snodgrass says there is a need for comprehensive preventive measures to curb the escalating stroke epidemic, adding that he believes educating the public about risk factors and promoting lifestyle modifications can significantly reduce

DID YOU KNOW?

the incidence of strokes.

Approximately, 80% of chronic diseases and premature death can be prevented by making healthier lifestyle choices.

Experts advise people take the following steps to lower their risk of having a stroke:

MONITOR BLOOD PRESSURE AND CHOLESTEROL:

High blood pressure and elevated cholesterol levels are major risk factors for strokes.

Regular monitoring of these vital signs and adherence to prescribed medications can prevent complications and reduce the likelihood of experiencing a stroke.

MAINTAIN A HEALTHY DIET AND EXERCISE:

Adopting a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins can help control weight, blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

Regular physical activity is also crucial for maintaining cardiovascular health and managing your weight.

QUIT SMOKING:

Smoking significantly increases the risk of stroke by damaging blood vessels and promoting the formation of blood clots.

LIMIT ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION:

Excessive alcohol intake can raise blood pressure and contribute to the development of heart disease and stroke. Moderation is key, with healthcare professionals recommending no more than one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men.

MANAGE DIABETES:

Individuals with diabetes are at a higher risk of suffering from strokes due to elevated blood sugar levels that damage blood vessels over time.

Proper management of diabetes through medication, diet and regular monitoring is essential for preventing complications.

Snodgrass believes that, in addition to individual efforts, those in power need to do more to reduce the global burden of strokes.

“Governments and policymakers must prioritise public health initiatives aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles, improving access to healthcare services and implementing population-wide interventions to tackle the root causes of non-communicable diseases,” he said.

“By raising awareness, implementing preventive measures and fostering collaboration between healthcare professionals, policymakers and communities, we can strive towards a future where strokes are less prevalent and individuals can lead healthier, more fulfilling lives.

“It is imperative that we act decisively and collectively to stem the tide of this growing public health crisis before it exacts an even greater toll in our country and on societies worldwide.” — Supplied.

- Over 12 million people worldwide will have their first stroke this year and 6,5 million will die as a result.
- Over 100 million people in the world have experienced stroke.
- The incidence of stroke increases significantly with age, however over 60% of strokes happen to people under the age of 70 and 16% happen to those under the age of 50.
- Over half of people who have a stroke will die as a result.
- For survivors the impact can be devastating affecting physical mobility, eating, speech and language, emotions and thought processes. These complex needs can result in care and financial challenges for the individual and for their caregivers, as well as placing significant demands on health and social welfare provision.
- Rates of stroke are growing fastest in low and middle income countries, often where healthcare providers find it more challenging to provide the care that is needed for effective prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of stroke.