

# Stress: A Preventable Costly Problem

## First, let's understand the real dangers of stress.

To remedy stress and prevent its many related illnesses, a vital distinction must be made between “stress” and “stress damage.”

The main problem is NOT “stress”! It's certainly not saber toothed tigers from cave days. They've been extinct for millennia and can no longer be blamed. The real health danger is **unstopped stress damage chain reactions** from a single harmful event: **HPA-axis activations**.

This illness-causing process gets triggered hundreds of times daily by our stressful thinking! Every worry, stressful thought, anxiety, fear, anger or frustration — no matter how tiny or trivial — instantly activates the release of a cascade of stress hormones through three glands that form the HPA-axis: hypothalamus, pituitary and adrenal.

Emergency survival modes are triggered whenever you see, hear or perceive something as stressful — through your senses, your thoughts or from emotional interpretations. The real health danger of stress is the damage that results when we don't have the tools to turn off the HPA-axis before the next worry triggers new flight/flight survival reactions.

Damage increases because a steady state of internal stress is produced and maintained by constant HPA-axis activation. Stress damage increases because these HPA activations are not effectively “corrected.” Chain reactions occur when the uncomfortable sensations of stress are not stopped, but keep developing — first into symptoms, then illness and diseases along four main pathways of stress damage.

1. **Cardiovascular** (*hypertension, atherosclerotic plaque formations, heart attack, strokes*)
2. **Metabolic** (*insulin resistant diabetes, obesity*)
3. **Immune** (*flu, infections, auto-immune, cancer*)
4. **Psychological** (*anxiety, depression, insomnia, negativity*)

Amazingly, this single event: **HPA-axis triggered stress damage chain reactions** accounts for **60%-90%** of primary care doctor visits (*Harvard Business Review*) and half of absenteeism (*NIOSH*). It costs U.S. businesses over \$300 Billion per year (*World Health Organization*).

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*For a dynamic visual of how this harmful stress damage event flows, take a look at the **Stress Damage Chain Reactions** infographic on page 10.*

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