• If secondary care is needed, talk to your GP about a referral to a local or an out-of-area service. Contact one of the organisations listed below for support or advice.

10. Do not ignore the early warning signs of stress

• Speak to colleagues, friends and family
• Analyse the cause of the stress
• Initiate discussion with your clinical director and local colleagues to see whether changes could be made to your work
• Seek appropriate medical help when needed

Further advice and support

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Stress
There are many different causes and sources of stress at work, including:

- factors related to the job such as workload, time pressures, shift patterns related to the European Working Time Directive, etc.
- role-related stress, including the notion of the level of responsibility and the concept of having responsibility without any control
- conflict between home and work life pressures
- relationship difficulties with colleagues at work and partner/family at home
- career development factors, including job security
- factors related to the organisation you work in and the teams in which you work; these factors might include problems with communication in teams and feeling that you are not able to participate in decisions.

(Adapted from Arnold et al, 1995).

Depression and Burnout
The prevalence of depression in UK doctors is between 10 and 20% (Ghodse, 2000). Among doctors, rates of burnout of 25 to 76% have been reported in the literature. Burnout is defined as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, involving the development of negative self-concepts, negative job attitudes and a loss of concern and feeling for patients (Pines & Maslach, 1978). Stress and burnout lead to maladaptive coping strategies, such as substance misuse.

Substance Misuse
About 1 in 15 doctors have a history of drug or alcohol dependency (British Medical Association, 1998). One study found that family practitioners have the highest prevalence of substance misuse (McGovern et al, 2000) and another study found that psychiatrists have rates of substance misuse of 14.3% (Hughes et al, 1992).

How to Look After Yourself

1. Monitoring Your Own Health and Stress Levels
   - Consider how you are coping with work – are you getting angry or feeling overwhelmed by the amount of work you have?
   - Monitor your sleeping pattern. Ensure that you are getting 8 hours of good rest every night.

2. Healthy Living
   Although we are very good at talking to patients about the importance of diet and exercise, we are not always good at following our own advice.
   - It is important to ensure that you have time to exercise for at least 30 minutes five times a week
   - It is important to have a balanced diet and ensure that you do not miss meals during the day because of work
   - Consider reducing your caffeine intake to one cup of coffee or equivalent per day

3. Monitor Your Own Coping Strategies to Stress, Including Alcohol or Substance Use
   - Do you have time within the week to do things you enjoy?
   - Are work stressors having an impact on your home life?
   - How do you cope with stress?
   - Are you able to find time within the day to relax?
   - Have you found yourself drinking too much alcohol because you are feeling stressed?
   - Do you need to keep an alcohol diary?
   - Do you need to seek help for addictions?

4. Discuss with Friends and Family
   It is important to have a network of support outside work, and, if possible, interests outside of work.

5. Informal Discussion with Colleagues
   Through local peer groups or mentoring relationships. Your colleagues have probably faced similar difficulties or problems, and can help you to think about strategies for making a change.
   - Discuss with individuals you trained with/are training with, to get another person’s perspective on the situation.

6. Formal Discussion with Colleagues
   This might be through discussions with the clinical director or via mechanisms such as the job planning and appraisal processes to help tackle work-related issues leading to stress.

7. Make Changes to Your Work/Life Balance
   - Is the balance working for you, your family and your colleagues and patients?
   - Do you need to review your job plan with your clinical director?
   - Could you consider re-organising your work, or reducing the number of hours you work?
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8. Supervision/Mentoring
   - Would a supervisor or mentor be an appropriate source of support and advice?
   - Does your trust or organisation have mechanisms to identify mentors for you?
   - Would case supervision with a psychotherapist or other senior colleague be helpful on a regular basis?
   - If you have a supervisor, have you discussed any difficulties with that person?
   - For trainees, most deaneries have a training support unit (TSU). You can refer yourself to a TSU and they can see you to discuss any difficulties. They are able to support you in a variety of ways, including career guidance, counselling and tailored training to meet your needs.

9. Seek Help for Health Problems
   - A UK study (Forsythe et al, 1999) found that although 96% of doctors are registered with a general practitioner (GP), little use was made of their services and a quarter of consultants would bypass their GP to obtain consultant advice
   - Make sure you are registered with a GP
   - If you are unwell, seek the advice of your GP
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This information guide is intended for a psychiatrist who needs advice about looking after themselves. This information should be used as a guide only and is not a substitute for professional advice. If you need further advice and support, please contact the Psychiatrists’ Support Service or one of the organisations listed at the end of this information guide.

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