



SLEEPY HEAD: Tiredness may indicate more than just stress at work, including a possible thyroid problem

Wake-up call on stress at work

My workload has increased and I feel very irritable and stressed most days. I also find that it takes me a long time to wake up and my brain feels foggy until around 2pm, despite getting around eight hours sleep. I don't have time for counselling at the moment. Can you recommend any self-help measures?

WE, Suffolk

The main symptoms of stress are short temper, difficulty concentrating, headache and sleep disturbance — and it sounds as if you have most of these.

However, as you say you have difficulty waking and remain tired for most of the day, Professor Stephen Palmer at the Centre for Stress Management in London recommends that as well as dealing with stress, you see your doctor for a check-up. "Some illnesses such as an underactive thyroid can make a person feel lethargic, or depression can cause a person to be foggy-brained and make it hard for them to get moving," he says.

To tackle the stress itself, Prof Palmer advises you to take a look at your work practices. "Many people end up suffering badly from stress because they are not assertive enough to say no to their employer when they are given more than they can cope with," he adds. "Others are able to handle the amount of work, but 'awfulise' the situation so that they panic, instead of calmly getting on with the task.

"When faced with deadlines, others procrastinate and start working on less important tasks, and put off doing the actual job until the last minute."

Making sure you take adequate breaks during the working day is very important, adds Prof Palmer.

You may find it helpful to meditate in the evenings and you can buy several good books which teach you how to do it. Alternatively, try listening to a relaxation tape, for example, *Harmonic Journeys* by Jonathan Goldman, available via mail order from Susan Lever on 01287 636350, priced £11.49.

HEALTH HELPLINE

MARY SALMON asks a range of experts for advice on work-related stress,