MetLife | Return to Health

Healthcare Workers and Burnout



Burnout is an occupational syndrome that refers to the exhaustion and apathy that may come after dealing with prolonged workplace stress and a lack of work-life balance.[2,4]
While stress is often temporary, burnout likely will not diminish unless active changes are made.[4]

35-57%
of **nurses and physicians** report symptoms of burnout.[1]

45-60%
of **medical students and residents** report symptoms of burnout.[1]

Burnout can adversely impact both healthcare workers and patients, with consequences including adverse wellness effects on employees, staffing shortages, decreased time spent with patients, increased medical errors and hospital-acquired infections.[3]

Burnout can lead to feeling detached and cynical about work, emotional exhaustion, and a low sense of personal accomplishment at work.[2,3]

Burnout can lead to:

- Impaired decision making
- Increased negativity or cynicism regarding work
- Irritability
- Negative interactions with colleagues or patients
- Fatigue and exhaustion
- Increased substance use or abuse
- Decreased productivity

What can be done to prevent healthcare worker burnout?

Healthcare organization:

- Foster an environment committed to employees' health and safety
- Improve access to confidential mental health and substance abuse treatment
- Provide resources for self-care and mental health
- Foster community and camaraderie to mitigate burnout, loneliness, and isolation
- Support an inclusive work environment by recognizing and addressing bias, racism, and discrimination in the workplace
- Allow greater flexibility to promote work-life balance

Healthcare workers:

- Recognize the signs of burnout
- Discuss workload with supervisor or human resources
- Take time away from work
- Connect with peers and colleagues to reduce isolation and loneliness
- Implement stress management/reduction practices routinely
- Acknowledge small victories, moments of joy, and connections with others
- Focus on self-care and physical/emotional well-being
- Advocate for changes in the workplace
- Utilize health and wellness benefits

The information contained herein is for purely informational purposes only, and is not intended to present medical, occupational, or therapeutic advice.

1. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, Committee on Systems Approaches to Improve Patient Care by Supporting Clinician Well-Being. (2019). Taking Action Against Clinician Burn out: A Systems Approach to Professional Well-Being. National Academies Press. Retrieved from https://nam.edu/systems-approaches-to-improve-patient-care-by-supporting-clinician-well-being/
2. https://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-international-classification-of-diseases
3. Health Worker Burnout — Current Priorities of the U.S. Surgeon General (hhs.gov)
4. Facing Burnout as a Healthcare Worker | Mental Health America (mhanational.org)

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