

Tired, anxious,
overwhelmed?
It might not just
be burnout

We all feel run down from time to time. But if you're constantly exhausted, struggling to focus, or finding it harder than usual to cope, you might be wondering: **is this just stress or could there be something more going on?**

Burnout has become a buzzword in recent years, especially as many of us juggle demanding jobs, busy lives, and unpredictable routines. **But what feels like burnout isn't always caused by work stress alone.** It might be a sign of something deeper whether that's anxiety, depression, long COVID, hormonal changes, or even undiagnosed ADHD.

In this guide, we'll break down what burnout looks like, how to spot when it might be something else, and **what steps you can take to start feeling like yourself again.**

What burnout looks like

Burnout isn't just feeling a bit tired after a long week. **It's a state of physical, mental and emotional exhaustion that builds up over time.** Often, it's linked to work. But it can also come from long-term stress in other parts of life, like caring for family, managing money worries or dealing with health issues.

Here's how burnout can show up in daily life:



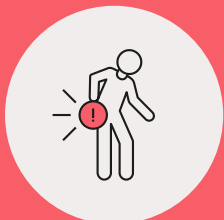
Emotional signs

You might feel **more irritable than usual**, or **emotionally flat**. Things that used to excite you now leave you cold. You might also find yourself snapping at people or feeling detached from everything around you.



Cognitive signs

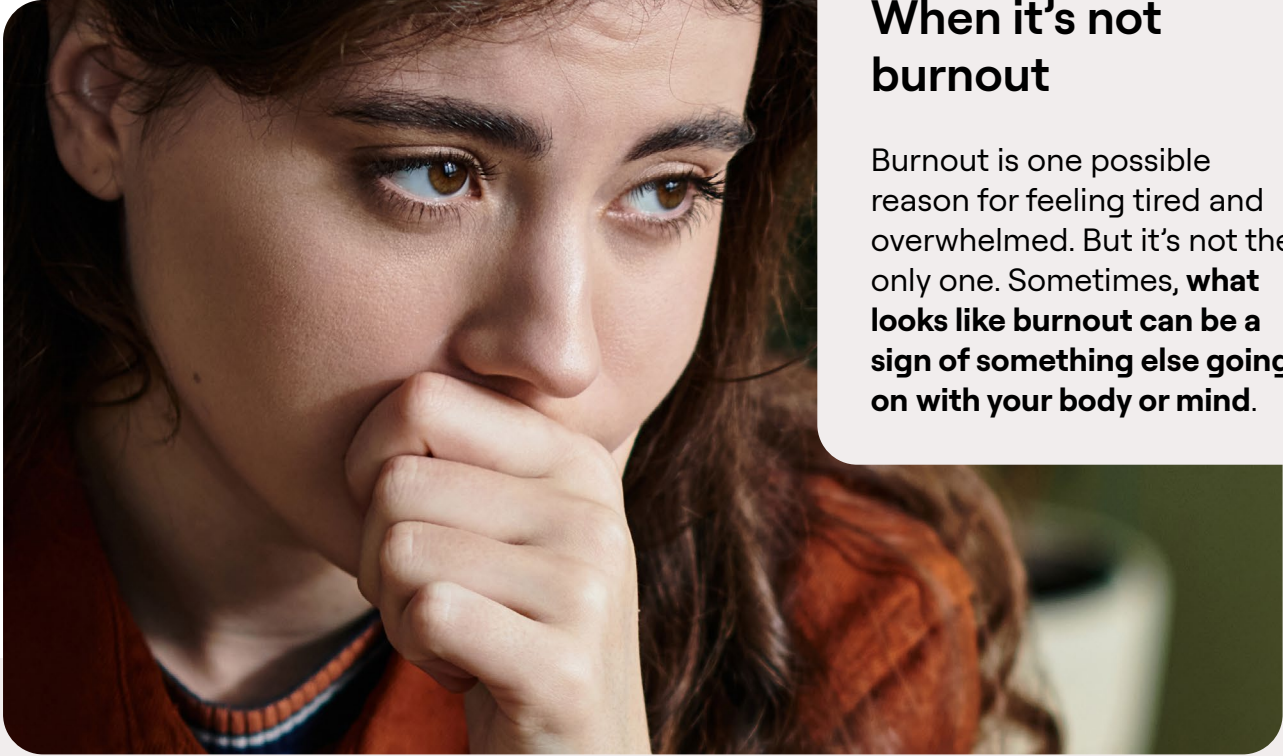
Burnout can affect how you think. You might **struggle to concentrate**, **forget things** or **feel like your brain is foggy**. It can be harder to make decisions or stay motivated.



Physical signs

Burnout doesn't just affect your mind. It can show up in your body too. You might feel constantly tired, even after sleeping. Headaches, muscle tension, and digestive issues are also common.

If this sounds familiar, it's worth paying attention. These symptoms can creep up slowly, making them easy to miss or dismiss as just being busy or stressed.



When it's not burnout

Burnout is one possible reason for feeling tired and overwhelmed. But it's not the only one. Sometimes, **what looks like burnout can be a sign of something else going on with your body or mind.**

Here are a few common causes that can be mistaken for burnout:



Anxiety

Anxiety can make you feel constantly on edge, even when nothing is obviously wrong. You might struggle to relax, feel restless or find it hard to switch off at night. Over time, **this can lead to mental exhaustion and low energy**, which can look a lot like burnout.



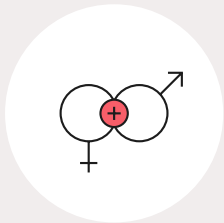
Depression

Like burnout, depression can cause tiredness, low motivation and difficulty concentrating. **But it also tends to come with a deep sense of sadness or emptiness.** You might lose interest in things you used to enjoy or find it hard to feel anything at all.



Chronic fatigue or anaemia

If you feel tired all the time, even after resting, **there could be a medical reason**. Conditions like chronic fatigue syndrome or anaemia can leave you drained and foggy, no matter how well you sleep or manage your stress.



Hormonal changes

Fluctuations in hormones, **especially during perimenopause**, can affect energy levels, sleep and mood. You might feel more anxious or down than usual, and struggle with brain fog or poor concentration.



Long COVID

Some people continue to feel exhausted, achy or mentally foggy **weeks, months or even years after a COVID infection**. This can feel very similar to burnout, but it has a different cause and often needs different support.



ADHD or other forms of neurodivergence

Undiagnosed ADHD in adults can lead to emotional overwhelm, forgetfulness, and mental fatigue. If you often feel scattered, drained or frustrated with daily tasks, **it might be worth exploring whether your brain works a little differently**.

These are just a few examples. The main thing to remember is this: **not all tiredness is caused by stress**. If rest isn't helping, it might be time to look a bit deeper.

Why people miss the signs

It's easy to brush off tiredness or feeling low as just part of a busy life. But when symptoms linger, **it's important to pause and ask what might really be behind them.**



Blaming everything on stress

Stress is common, **so it often becomes the go-to explanation for feeling off.** But if you've been resting, taking breaks, or trying to slow down and still feel exhausted, stress might not be the full story.

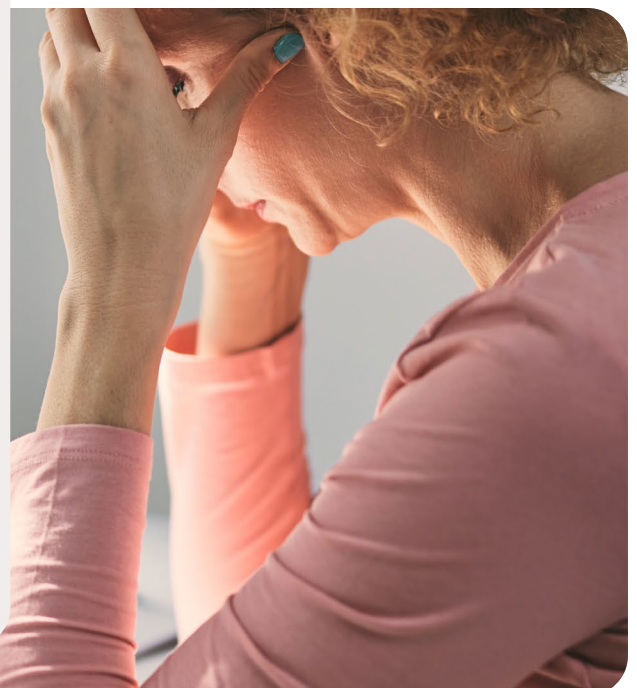
Masking symptoms when working remotely

When you're not commuting or in a physical workplace, **it can be harder to spot changes in your energy or mood.** You might skip lunch, blur the line between work and rest, or hide how you're feeling from others on video calls. **Over time, this makes it easier to ignore signs that something's not quite right.**

Lack of awareness

Most people don't know how conditions like **ADHD, hormonal changes or post-viral fatigue can show up.** If you've never been told that anxiety can cause physical exhaustion, or that perimenopause can affect focus and sleep, **you might never think to question it.** Instead, you push through, and hope things will improve on their own.

The truth is that many people live with health issues they've never had named. **Being tired or overwhelmed all the time is common, but it's not something you should have to live with.**



What to do if this sounds like you

If you've been nodding along and thinking this feels familiar, you're not alone. Many people live with symptoms for months or even years before realising something deeper might be going on. **There are steps you can take and you don't have to figure it out by yourself.**



Keep track of how you feel

Start by noting down what you're experiencing. Write down when the tiredness or low mood shows up, what makes it worse, and what helps. This doesn't need to be complicated. **A few lines each day in your phone or notebook is enough.** Over time, this can help you spot patterns and give your GP or support team a clearer picture.

Talk to someone

Sometimes, **a conversation is the first step toward feeling better.** Whether it's a GP, therapist, trusted friend or colleague, speaking up can help you understand what's happening and what to do next.



Know when to seek help

If your symptoms have lasted **more than two weeks, are getting worse, or are affecting your work, relationships or day-to-day life**, it's time to reach out. Even if you're not sure what's wrong, that's OK. You don't need to have the answers before asking for help.

The sooner you get support, the easier it is to make changes that work for you. You deserve to feel well and supported not just getting through the day.

What support can help

Getting help doesn't always mean making big changes. In fact, **small steps can often make a big difference**. Once you know what's behind your tiredness or stress, you can explore support that fits your needs.



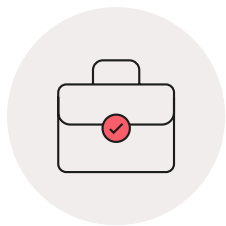
Talking therapies

A mental health professional can help you make sense of your symptoms and find practical ways to manage them. This might include **cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)**, **counselling**, or simply **having a safe space to talk through how you're feeling**.



Medication

If you're dealing with anxiety, depression, or another underlying condition, **medication might be part of your treatment plan**. Your GP can talk you through your options and help you decide what's right for you.



Workplace support

If your symptoms are affecting your work, **you might be entitled to reasonable adjustments**. This could include flexible hours, reduced workload, or support from occupational health. Many employers also offer **wellbeing programmes or mental health check-ins**.



Self-care that's realistic

Rest is important, **but it's not just about sleeping more**. You might need time to recover, more support at home, or a break from certain pressures. Even small shifts, **like setting boundaries with work or taking regular screen breaks**, can help you feel more in control.

Getting support isn't a sign of weakness. It's a step towards feeling better and understanding your needs more clearly.



You don't have to wait to feel worse

If you're feeling tired, anxious or overwhelmed all the time, don't brush it off. **It's OK to question whether stress is the only reason.** Whether you're dealing with burnout or something else, support is available and **the sooner you reach out, the sooner you can start feeling like yourself again.**

You can speak to a GP about your symptoms or **explore mental health support** that fits around your lifestyle. If work is a factor, **ask your employer what support they offer.** Help is closer than you think.

Contact [HealthHero](#) today for more support and advice. We're with you every step of the way.

All information correct as of May, 2025