

# Well-Being Risk Factors



As a family physician, your personal well-being is paramount. Taking care of yourself is integral to your ability to effectively take care of your patients and to authentically encourage them to practice self-care.

In helping our patients, however, it is sometimes easy to forget about ourselves and put our own well-being in second or even third place. Below are behaviors that could signal that your well-being needs some attention.

Individually, any of these factors do not necessarily indicate a family physician at risk, but if several behaviors apply, reach out to people in your life and a well-being professional/physician to receive treatment and support.

## What to Watch For

## What You Should Know

### Work-Life Imbalance

One in four [physicians](#) work between 61 and 80 hours a week. According to data from the American Medical Association, consistently maintaining long work hours contributes to lower job satisfaction. Often, administrative work is to blame. If possible, consider [steps](#) you can take to reduce this burden, such as delegating managing EHR messages to your team.

### Change in Appetite and Energy Levels

Roughly half of the respondents to [Medscape's National Physician Burnout & Suicide Report 2020\\*](#) said they coped with burnout by eating junk food (33%) and binge eating (20%). It can be difficult to find time to eat balanced meals during the day when there is so much work to be done. Try meal prepping and scheduling time to eat throughout the day. The best way you can care for your patients is to care for yourself.

### Alcohol and Substance Misuse

Roughly one in four physician respondents to [Medscape's National Physician Burnout & Suicide Report 2020\\*](#) said they turn to alcohol to cope with burnout. (Only 1% to 2% indicated prescription drug or marijuana products use.) If you notice your use or a colleague's use is outside of what is recommended, it might be time to seek professional support.

### Errors in Clinical Care

Clinician errors happen. But if you or a colleague is making repeated errors and multiple types of errors, this could be cause for concern. Be aware those errors may not be related to well-being, but could be due to cognitive issues, poor concentration, difficulty using technology, etc. Have a conversation about the nature of the errors and how they can be resolved.

### Shortness with Colleagues and Patients

At some point, family physicians will experience a time of workload stress that may result in a sharp response to a request or question. If this happens to you, examine the root of the reaction and seek support to improve the underlying cause and the behavior.

### Disruptive Behavior

Arguing with colleagues and other disruptive behaviors are not conducive to a well-run practice. If a fellow family physician is exhibiting disruptive behavior, consider asking them if they want to speak with you or a professional. Let them know you care about them. For employers, let your employee know that you care about them as a person and professional, but their behavior isn't acceptable. Offer clear guidelines for the path forward and provide a prevention plan. If your practice doesn't have an established code of conduct and doesn't address this in the physician contract, it might be time to add them.

If you recognize that you are exhibiting [disruptive behavior](#), reach out to your family physician and a well-being professional to discuss what might be causing the behavior and receive support and treatment.

### Patient and Colleague Complaints

Family physicians strive to know their colleagues and patients well. If patients or colleagues detect a change in your or a colleague's demeanor and mention it, it could be a red flag.

### Disengaged with Staff or Patients

According to [Medscape's National Physician Burnout & Suicide Report 2020\\*](#), one of the two key ways many physicians cope with burnout is isolating themselves from others. If you notice this in combination with other red flags, it could reveal a physician who is struggling and in need of help.

\* When you click to access the report, you will be prompted to create a free account.

If you are having thoughts about suicide or hurting yourself, reach out for help immediately. Contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-8255 (TALK).