

Anger and Hostility

Anger is a common and often necessary emotion. Anger lets us know when we have problems that need to be solved and gives us energy to come to a resolution. However, if you are angry all the time, or if you can't control your anger, it can cause serious problems.

When you get angry, your blood pressure goes up and adrenaline and other hormones are released into your blood stream. These are all ways that your body gets prepared for a fight. However, if you're angry all the time then your blood pressure stays high all the time. This increases your risk of heart attack and other illnesses. When you are angry all the time this is called hostility. Hostility can cause physiological problems and it can also isolate you from other people.

When your anger becomes too intense, it's hard to even think straight, let alone express yourself correctly. It's important to realize when you're becoming angry before the feeling overpowers you. Try to understand why you're angry and find a healthy way to express it. Try talking with a friend, writing or drawing, and exercising. Once you've pinpointed the source of your anger and found a way to express it, let it go. Forgiving and forgetting can actually lower your blood pressure and ease muscle tension.

If you are angry with a particular person, and you want to confront that person, use "I" statements to express how you feel. For example, say, "I feel neglected." "You" statements, such as, "You never pay attention to me," blame the other person who then becomes defensive.

If you find that anger or hostility is getting in the way of your work or your relationships, ask your doctor or nurse practitioner about seeing a trained counselor. This is especially critical if your anger is causing you to be violent with yourself or with someone else.

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Use these Kaiser Permanente resources for reliable health information:

- ❖ Connect to our Web site at members.kp.org to access health and drug encyclopedias, interactive programs, message boards, health classes, and much more.
- ❖ Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- ❖ Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, or other resources.
- ❖ With a *Kaiser Permanente Healthphone Directory*, you can pick topics and messages to hear on Kaiser Permanente Healthphone (1-800-332-7563; TTY: 1-800-777-9059). Request a *Directory* from your Health Center or Department or download a copy at members.kp.org. (Search "Healthphone".)

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor.