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Adrenal Fatigue & Stress

High pressure job, financial constraints, relationship problems, family pressures, moving house? Any of these and more can frazzle your nerves and make you vulnerable to illness. Everyone is exposed to one type of stress or another in their lives. A certain degree of stress is in fact necessary; it is only when stress becomes out of hand that it becomes a problem

How does the body respond to stress?

Stress of any kind - good or bad - causes the adrenal glands to work harder. Their job is to secrete these stress fighting hormones that regulate many vital body functions. In order that the adrenal glands can work optimally and carry on producing these hormones, a steady supply of nutrients is required.

The adrenal glands produce hormones called cortisol and adrenaline which helps us respond to stress. It is healthy for us to produce small amounts of these hormones which have important functions in the body. In health cortisol is naturally produced in higher quantities in the morning and lower at night. This helps us to function throughout the day, but does not interfere with rest and sleep at night.

Higher and more prolonged levels of cortisol in the bloodstream (like those associated with chronic stress) have been shown to have negative effects, such as:

- Impaired mental performance
- Suppressed thyroid function
- Poor blood sugar control → leading to fluctuating energy levels and mood
- Decreased bone density
- Decrease in muscle tissue
- Higher blood pressure
- Poor immune function leading to repeated infections
- Reduced inflammatory responses in the body
- Increased abdominal fat, associated with:
 - Heart Attacks
 - Strokes
 - Diabetes

Excessive production of adrenalin in response to chronic stress can lead to:

- Palpitations
- High blood pressure
- Muscular tension
- Poor digestive function
- Anxiety & Panic Attacks
- Irritability

Adrenal Exhaustion

Chronic stress can lead to adrenal burnout where the body is unable to produce sufficient adrenal hormones. At this point you can start to feel quite unwell and become unable to cope with stress at all.



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Who Suffers from Adrenal Fatigue?

Anybody can suffer from adrenal fatigue – you just need to encounter enough stress! People who drive themselves hard, don't take enough time in their lives to rest and relax and those who's personalities drive them constantly – perfectionists, chronic worriers, people who feel chronically unhappy with their lives or who have experienced severe stress or emotional trauma are at risk of adrenal fatigue.

What Causes Adrenal Fatigue?

Stress! Stress comes from a variety of sources – physical, emotional, psychological, environmental, from illness or infection. Often our lives throw more than one stress at us at a time and this is when our adrenal glands can really begin to suffer.

Common causes of adrenal Fatigue:

- Bereavement
- Financial stress
- Work related stress
- Relationship problems
- Hectic lifestyle
- Excessive exercise
- Chronic anxiety / fear
- Psychological stress
- Unwanted unemployment
- Smoking
- Prolonged insomnia
- Lack of “me” time / relaxation
- Excess caffeine intake
- Poor diet / eating habits
- Recovery from injury / illness
- Chronic health problems
- Allergies
- Chronic infections

Symptoms that can commonly be associated with Adrenal Fatigue

- Persistent tiredness not relieved by rest
- Exhaustion
- Nervousness, Irritability, anxiety
- Depression
- Inability to concentrate
- Poor memory
- Poor blood sugar control
- Addicted to stimulants & sugar to get through the day
- PMT
- Heavy periods – particularly worse at night
- Menopausal problems
- Low blood pressure
- Light headedness on standing
- Headaches
- Poor resistance to infection
- Slow recovery from any kind of stress (exercise, overwork, mental strain, inadequate sleep, emotional trauma, injury, surgery)
- Severe or recurrent stresses
- Difficulty waking up in the morning
- Craving for salty foods
- Bouts of anger / irritation / reduced tolerance to others
- Generally feel worse early morning, mid afternoon, but better in the evening
- Less productive / able to concentrate on work
- Forgetful
- Weight gain around the middle
- Poor tolerance to the cold
- Fuzzy headed / forgetful



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- Feeling worse if you miss a meal
- Everything is an effort
- You can't cope with pressure or change
- Low libido

How Can I test For Adrenal Fatigue?

Iris Contraction: If you shine a light directly into the pupil, it should contract and be able to hold the contraction. In adrenal fatigue the pupil is unable to hold the contraction and flickers, alternatively contracting and dilating until it remains dilated despite the light shining into it.

Low Blood Pressure / Blood pressure drops when standing: Your blood pressure should actually rise when you stand up. If it does not, or it drops, then this can indicate adrenal fatigue.

Adrenal Scratch: Make one firm scratch upon your inner lower arm and observe the reaction. In a normal reaction, there will initially be a white line, but this should redden within 10 seconds. If you have low adrenal function, the white line will remain for about 2 minutes and will get larger.

Complete Dr Wilson's Adrenal Fatigue Questionnaire: See download on my website.

Laboratory Tests for Adrenal Fatigue

Various laboratories will test for adrenal fatigue. The test is usually done with a saliva sample. Saliva hormone tests are more indicative of the levels of hormone within the cells than those done with other samples. Blood tests will measure levels of circulating hormones in the blood outside the cells.

There are various profiles available with prices around £70-£90 depending upon the profile. Please contact Liz for further information.