

# **ADRENAL FATIGUE**

## **The Adrenal Glands**

The adrenal glands are located above our kidneys and secrete hormones, such as cortisol, adrenaline, and androgens (which are converted into testosterone in the body) to maintain homeostasis necessary for life, specifically in times of perceived stress. During stress, the hormones secreted by the adrenal glands mobilize resources and energy needed to deal with the changes in our environment, internally and externally.

## **The Stress Hormone Cortisol**

Cortisol is essential to the maintenance of homeostasis by modulating blood sugar levels, fat, protein and carbohydrate breakdown, immune responses, and blood pressure. Levels fluctuate normally throughout the day and night (highest at 8am and lowest at 4pm) and more cortisol is secreted during a stressful event. In the past, stresses were most commonly physical threats and the increased cortisol allowed greater energy reserves in order to overcome the threat. Once the threat was overcome, bodily functions and cortisol levels returned to normal.

In our society and culture, stresses do not tend to be physical threats – we are often stressed sitting at a computer or behind a steering wheel. And stress is chronic. This leads to chronically high levels of cortisol and for some, eventually, chronically low levels as the adrenal glands become fatigued from constant stimulation.

## **Symptoms of Adrenal Fatigue**

Adrenal fatigue occurs after periods of intense and chronic stress. The major cause of the symptoms of adrenal fatigue is chronically low levels of cortisol. Looking at the functions of cortisol, we can understand the symptoms of not having enough:

- Low blood sugar
- Dehydration
- Weight loss
- Low blood pressure, worse in going from sitting to standing
- Weakness, fatigue, and dizziness
- Pain and inflammation
- Nausea and diarrhea
- Sleep disruption

## **Treatment of Adrenal Fatigue**

Depending on the symptoms you may be exhibiting, treatment of adrenal fatigue can include dietary adjustments, botanical and nutrient supplements, and stress management techniques. Routine is very important for the health of your adrenals, so even going to sleep and waking up at the same time every day can improve your overall sense of wellness.

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