

# **Adrenal Fatigue**

Why you might not be “just tired”.

Are you beyond tired most mornings, even after a full nights sleep? Getting sick more often and staying sick longer? Notice you are gaining weight around your mid-section and have ZERO tolerance to any kind of stress?

In addition you may be craving salty foods and feel dizzy upon standing. Your doctor could even be having a hard time diagnosing what is wrong with you. You may be experiencing a little known condition called “Adrenal Fatigue”. Your adrenals are tiny glands perched atop each kidney. Relevant to their size they are massively important to our health.

## **What do Adrenal Glands do?**

Their job is to release hormones that regulate many processes in our bodies. Two of these are Adrenaline and a hormone called Cortisol. When our bodies are under stress or sense danger these two hormones are released. In primitive man it may have looked something like this “Oh, there’s a tiger, hope it doesn’t eat me, QUICK!, run in the other direction!” Once the danger had passed those hormones would subside and the body would return to normal functioning in what is called the “rest and digest” mode.

In today’s world though our bodies can receive stress signals many times each day such as “I’m late for work again because of the kids, what will my boss say this time?”. Or “when will those results on my mom’s biopsy be back?” “That project is due WHEN??!!”

Our adrenal glands will dutifully pump out adrenaline and cortisol, collectively called “stress hormones” to help us weather what is seen as emergencies but with very little break in between these “emergencies” they will eventually tire and be unable to adequately release enough hormones into our systems causing the symptoms listed above in addition to poor sleep and appetite.

## **Can Adrenal Fatigue Be Cured?**

You absolutely can recover from Adrenal Fatigue. A holistic lifestyle approach seems to work best. Here we’ll discuss the three areas of Adrenal Fatigue management. It’s worth mentioning that Adrenal Fatigue takes a long time to develop and so takes some time to recover from fully. Be gentle with yourself and don’t expect miracles overnight. It could take up to six months, or longer, before all your symptoms resolve.

### **Lifestyle**

There are many lifestyle changes you can make to help your adrenal glands recover.

- **Meditate** – a good meditation practice resets your whole body not just your adrenals and there are many types of meditation to choose from. Don’t think you have to sit on a cushion and empty your mind of all thoughts in order to be a successful meditator. You could experiment with relaxing sounds such as Tibetan Singing Bowls, or chanting a mantra or an affirmation that has great meaning to you. Progressive Muscle Relaxation is another form of meditation designed to systematically relax the whole body. You can practice more informal types of meditation such as deep breathing 10 times per hour. This is especially effective since stress is cumulative in the body and deep breathing breaks the cycle.

- Dial back your workouts – strenuous exercise stresses the adrenals. You don't have to commit to being a couch potato for 6 months but move to a gentler form of exercise such as walking or yoga during this time of restoration.
- Get to bed by 10PM – those with adrenal fatigue tend to get a surge of cortisol around 11PM making them feel energetic and wide awake, further impeding the full nights sleep they need to heal.

## **Diet**

You can help your body recover more quickly by making a few changes to your diet that will take the pressure off your adrenals glands.

- Cut out the caffeine – you might feel like you need it more now than ever just to get through the day, but caffeine is so hard on the adrenals. Getting it out of your diet will allow them to reset more easily.
- No processed sugar – The rapid blood sugar swings from high to low cause your adrenals to work harder. Sweeten with natural forms of sugar like mashed or blended fruits, stevia and maple syrup
- Switch to whole foods – processed foods cause inflammation. Eat a mix of whole grains, fruits and vegetables with the cleanest proteins you can find if you are not a vegetarian.

## **Supplements**

Supplementation can give your adrenals the help they need to get back to normal sooner rather than later. Here are 4 supplements and how they help.

Please consult your physician before starting any supplement regimen, **especially if you are taking prescription medication for high blood pressure.**

- Licorice – Licorice contains glycyrrhizic acid which inhibits the breakdown of cortisol, helping to restore normal levels of it in the body. **May raise blood pressure. Do not use if pregnant.**
- Rhodiola – Rhodiola is an *adaptogen*. Adaptogenic herbs of all kinds help restore balance to a bodily system. In this case if there were too much cortisol it would lower it and for our purposes, it acts to raise it.
- Ginseng – Ginseng acts as a “thermostat” on cortisol levels and supports healthy adrenals. It may be used for mild Adrenal Fatigue but not in the later stages where cortisol levels have dropped dramatically. **May raise blood pressure.**
- Bovine Adrenal Extract – This supplement is part of a classification called “glandulars”, meaning they are the processed glands of other animals, in this case cows. Because of this they are not suitable if you are vegan/vegetarian, pregnant or breastfeeding or have any sort of compromised immune system such as HIV/AIDS. **NEVER** use an injectable form as there can be serious injection site reactions. The best form of this seems to come from organically raised New Zealand cows where there has never been a case of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, otherwise known as Mad Cow Disease. Those cows are raised without the use of pesticides, hormones or antibiotics. Bovine Adrenal Extracts adaptogenic properties are only for those with early stage or very mild Adrenal Fatigue and should only be used in the short term. Those with long term Adrenal Fatigue would experience the more stimulatory effects. **Should be used with caution.**

The body is a symphony of actions and reactions and it will always try to return to a state of perfect inner balance called “homeostasis”. As you’ve read above there are things we can do to help restore that balance. Educate yourself completely, use therapies wisely and always consult your healthcare practitioner about any and all changes in your general health.