

OVERALL WELLNESS

As discussed in last month's issue, your adrenal glands are responsible for producing your stress hormones and so tend to be worked pretty hard throughout your day.

As with any organ or gland that is overworked, recovery time becomes a very important issue. Insufficient time given to recovery can result in adrenal fatigue (when your adrenals become so tired due to constantly having to overwork that they eventually just can't keep up and simply don't produce enough of the necessary hormones to keep you in good health). If this situation continues, adrenal failure can occur, with disastrous consequences for your long-term health.

The following can all lead to adrenal fatigue: lack of sleep; poor food choices; using food/drinks as stimulants when tired; staying up late even though fatigued; being constantly in a position of powerlessness; constantly driving yourself; trying to be perfect; staying in a no-win situation over time; lack of enjoyable and rejuvenating activities.

Some of the symptoms of adrenal fatigue to look out for include: difficulty getting up in the morning; continuing fatigue not relieved by sleep; craving for salt/salty food; lethargy; increased effort to do daily tasks; decreased sex drive; decreased ability to handle stress; increased time to recover from illness, injury or trauma; decreased productivity; decreased tolerance; increase of symptoms if meals are skipped or inadequate; increased PMS; mild depression; less enjoyment or happiness with life; light-headedness when standing up quickly; less focused/more fuzzy thoughts; less accurate memory.

There are, however, numerous ways in which you can manage adrenal stress, both with regard to nutrition and to lifestyle.

NUTRITIONAL

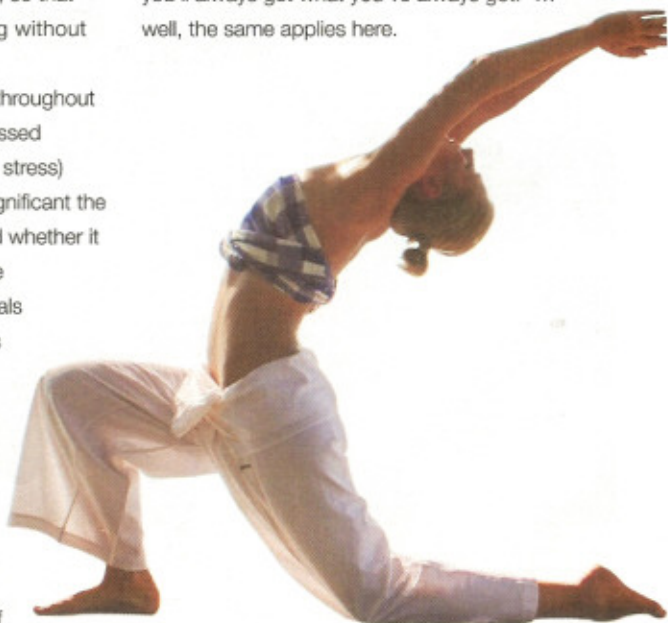
- Restrict your intake of processed carbohydrates (sandwiches, pasta, muffins, pastries, biscuits, fruit juices, fizzy drinks etc.) to keep blood sugar levels even
- Eat meals and snacks regularly to avoid low blood sugar levels
- Add some good quality protein and fat to every meal to balance the effects of insulin
- Avoid artificial stimulants (coffee, tea, chocolates, sugar etc.)

LIFESTYLE

- Try to rise at the same time every day, so that your body becomes used to waking without an alarm
- Be aware of your breathing patterns throughout the day, particularly when feeling stressed (breathe deeply and slowly to reduce stress)
- Try to stay calm and consider how significant the stressful event really is in your life and whether it will seem important in 6 months' time
- Give yourself time to enjoy eating meals and snacks and keep calm thoughts while you eat
- Try to bring regular physical activity into your life, as this can be a way to release stress
- Avoid high intensity exercise after 6 pm, as this will raise cortisol levels significantly
- Be kind to yourself – pamper yourself in some small way, every day
- Use muted/dimmed lighting at night and avoid the use of TVs and computers, particularly within 2 hours prior to retiring, in order to reduce cortisol levels

- Read calming books just before retiring in order to allow the central nervous system to 'shut down'
- Ensure that your sleeping environment is dark, ventilated and cool to ensure maximum serotonin (relaxation hormone) and melatonin (sleep hormone) output

As you can see, there are many things you can do to impact positively on the health of your adrenals, some of which may require a commitment to changing your current situation. You know the saying: "If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got!" ... well, the same applies here.



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