Strategy to Manage Adrenal Fatigue

What is Adrenal Fatigue?

Adrenal Fatigue is a collection of signs and symptoms, known as a “syndrome” that results when the adrenal glands function below the necessary level. Most commonly associated with intense or prolonged stress, it can also arise during or after acute or chronic infections, especially respiratory infections such as influenza, bronchitis or pneumonia. As the name suggests, its paramount symptom is fatigue that is not relieved by sleep. You may look and act relatively normal with Adrenal Fatigue and may not have any obvious signs of physical illness, yet you live with a general sense of unwellness, tiredness or “gray” feelings. People suffering from Adrenal Fatigue often have to use coffee, colas and other stimulants to get going in the morning and to prop themselves up during the day.

Adrenal Fatigue can wreak havoc with your life. In the more serious cases, the activity of the adrenal glands is so diminished that you may have difficulty getting out of bed for more than a few hours per day. With each increment of reduction in adrenal function, every organ and system in your body is more profoundly affected. Changes occur in your carbohydrate, protein and fat metabolism, fluid and electrolyte balance, heart and cardiovascular system, and even sex drive. Many other alterations take place at the biochemical and cellular levels in response to and to compensate for the decrease in adrenal hormones that occurs with Adrenal Fatigue. Your body does its best to make up for under-functioning adrenal glands, but it does so at a price.

How can you tell if you have Adrenal Fatigue?

You may be suffering from Adrenal Fatigue if you regularly experience one or more of the following symptoms:

- Tired for no reason
- Trouble getting up in the morning even when you go to bed at a reasonable hour
- Feeling rundown or overwhelmed
- Feeling weak or shaky
- Can’t bounce back from stress or illness
- Crave salty and sweet snacks
- Feeling best only after 6 PM
- Allergies
- Environmental sensitivities
- Sensitivity to light or noise

What causes Adrenal Fatigue?

Adrenal Fatigue occurs when your adrenal glands cannot adequately meet the demands of stress. The adrenal glands mobilize your body’s response to every kind of stress (whether
it’s physical, emotional or psychological) through hormones that regulate energy production and storage, heart rate, muscle tone, and other processes that enable you to cope with the stress. Whether you have an emotional crisis such as the death of a loved one, a physical crisis such as major surgery, or any type of severe repeated or constant stress in your life, your adrenals have to respond. If they don’t, or if their response is inadequate, you will experience some degree of Adrenal Fatigue.

In Adrenal Fatigue your adrenal glands retain some level of function, but not enough to maintain your normal, healthy homeostasis. Their output of regulatory hormones has been diminished by over-stimulation. This over-stimulation can be caused either by a very intense single stress or by chronic or repeated stresses that have a cumulative effect.

Circumstances that can lead to Adrenal Fatigue include:

- Prolonged stress or a severely stressful event
- Nutrient deficiencies or poor dietary habits
- Excessive use of caffeine, sugar, and refined carbohydrates
- Environmental pollutants or toxins
- Food allergies
- Excessive use of cortisone therapy

Who gets Adrenal Fatigue?

Anyone can suffer from Adrenal Fatigue at some time in his or her life. An illness, a life crisis, or a continuing difficult situation can drain the adrenal resources of even the healthiest person. However there are factors that can make you more prone to Adrenal Fatigue. These include certain lifestyles (poor diet, substance abuse, too little sleep and rest, or too many pressures), a chronic illness or repeated infections such as bronchitis or pneumonia, or a mother who suffered from Adrenal Fatigue around the time of your birth.

Are there other health conditions related to Adrenal Fatigue?

The processes that take place in any chronic disease, from arthritis to cancer, place demands on your adrenals. Therefore, take it as a general rule that if you are suffering from a chronic disease and morning fatigue is one of your symptoms, your adrenals are likely fatigued to some degree. Also anytime a medical treatment includes the use of corticosteroids, diminished adrenal function is most likely present. All corticosteroids are designed to imitate the actions of cortisol, a hormone secreted by the adrenals, and so the need for them arises primarily when the adrenals are not providing the required amounts of cortisol.
Can people with Adrenal Fatigue ever fully recover?

Yes, with proper treatment most people can fully recover from Adrenal Fatigue. What follows is a program to help in that recovery, including nutrition, exercise, lifestyle and supplementation.

Nutrition

People suffering from adrenal fatigue tend to consume caffeine and sugary or refined carbohydrates to give them an energy boost to get through their day. This contributes to the underlying fatigue of the adrenals by stressing and depleting them even further. Dietary improvements can have a major impact on overall energy, strength, and well-being.

General Meal and Eating Principles

- Eat breakfast before 10:00 a.m. It is critically important to replenish your blood sugar in the morning, so preferably a full meal, but at least a healthy snack, is needed to support your adrenals. Eat lunch before noon, have a health snack at 2:00 or 3:00 p.m., and eat dinner between 5:00 and 6:00 p.m. Have a small, healthy snack just before bedtime to maintain blood sugar through the night.
- At each meal, consume sufficient high-quality protein and fat to stabilize blood sugar until the next meal. Having an intake of sufficient protein (and fats, see below) helps to balance out energy levels and reduce the stress on the adrenals.
- When consuming carbohydrates, substitute more complex carbohydrates for simple, refined carbohydrates, such as natural grains in raw form, instead of refined grains.
- Make fresh fruits and vegetables a daily staple of your diet.
- When snacking, avoid high-sugar and refined carbohydrate snacks, which spike blood sugar and aggravate Adrenal Fatigue.
- Try wherever possible to eat foods that are in a whole, unprocessed state. You want them to be as close to their “state in nature” as possible. So organic, raw almonds are better than conventional, dry-roasted, salted almonds (which are highly processed).
- Reduce exposure to toxic substances, such as pesticides, chemicals etc. in food, by eating organic foods whenever possible.
- Consume 8 glasses of high-quality water (spring or highly-filtered water) throughout the day. Replace soft drinks with water, herbal teas, and fresh vegetable juices.

“Super Foods” for Adrenal Fatigue:

- Celtic sea salt
- Olives
- Vegetables, especially brightly-colored
- Fatty fish, e.g. wild-caught salmon
• Chicken and turkey
• Beans
• Nuts, such as walnuts and almonds
• Seeds, such as pumpkin and sunflower
• Avocado
• Kelp and seaweed

“Foods to Elude” for Adrenal Fatigue:

• Soda
• Sugar
• Fructose and high-fructose corn syrup
• Alcohol
• Fruit juices
• Chocolate
• Trans fats (hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated vegetable oils, margarine, french fries, fried foods, baked commercial baked goods)
• High-potassium foods, such as bananas, dried fruits, potatoes, asparagus
• Oranges and grapefruit
• White bread (bagels, rolls, muffins, pancakes), white rice, white potatoes and white pasta
• Artificial sweeteners, such as aspartame (NutraSweet, Equal), Splenda/Sucralose, Saccharin (Sweet and Low)
• Artificial preservatives, additives and colourings

Physical Activity

Regular, moderate exercise is very important to gradually rebuild strength and endurance. Begin with light exercise, such as a 10-minute walk, and work your way up to more moderate physical activity.

Lifestyle Recommendations

• Reduce or eliminate caffeine consumption.
• Reduce or eliminate alcohol consumption.
• Stress is a primary component of adrenal fatigue, and it is critical to lower your stress. Control stress levels through relaxation techniques, such as relaxation, visualization, meditation, breathing techniques, or yoga or other activities. Exercise also helps to reduce stress levels.
• Take short, horizontal rests during the day, 15-30 min. if possible, especially when drained or stressed.


Disclaimer: © 2008 Thornton Natural Healthcare Centre, LLC. All rights reserved.