

Adrenal Stress & Exhaustion

The adrenal glands get very little attention in western medicine, yet they have an important job of secreting the sex hormones and stress hormones that guide our reactions to stressors throughout the entire body.

We have two adrenal glands, which are comprised of two parts: the medulla and the cortex. The medulla triggers the instinctual “flight or fight” response, including the increase of blood sugar levels, the rate of breathing, cardiac output and blood flow to the brain, lungs and muscles. The cortex produces hormones that are essential in regulating excretory, immune defense, metabolic, mineral balancing and reproductive functions. The cortex also secretes corticosteroids in response to stress, and these hormones help us to cope with long-term stressors by converting protein to energy. This energy remains available long after the “flight or fight” response subsides.

Adrenal exhaustion occurs when the glands wear out from the continual production of the stress hormone cortisol, and can lead to chronic fatigue syndrome and eventually Addison’s disease. Most importantly adrenal exhaustion promotes hormone imbalance. Scientists now are linking cortisol to bone loss, compromised immune function, exhaustion, fat accumulation, infertility and memory loss.

During menopause, the workload of the adrenal glands are a primary source of sex hormones including estrogen. For women, particularly those who come home from a full-time job to then care for their family, cortisol remains elevated in the evening when it naturally should subside to allow the onset of sleep.

Adaptogens are herbs that enhance the ability of the body to resist the stressors and are called the great equalizers. Adaptogens exert a normalizing influence on the body, neither over-stimulating nor inhibiting normal body function, but providing a generalized balancing effect. Adaptogens include rhodiola, suma, siberian ginseng, schizandra & ashwagandha. Rhodiola increases resistance of the body to chemical, biological and physical stressors. Suma is considered a regenerative tonic for the nervous, reproductive and digestive systems. Siberian Ginseng has been shown to normalize reactions to physical and mental stress. Schizandra has been shown to counter the effects of stress and fatigue. Ashwagandha is used primarily as a general tonic to increase energy and improve overall health.

AdrenaSense, is a new adaptogenic product containing many of the valuable support herbs. It was formulated as a coping remedy for the times when life is too stressful. Stop by Food for Thought for more info.