

Adrenal Fatigue – Crash and Burn

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Have you recently experienced major stress in your life such as a death, divorce, or business failure? Do you feel that you have just not been the same since? This stress may have led to Adrenal Fatigue causing many problems including extreme fatigue and weakness.

Do you find it difficult to get out of bed in the morning? Does it take a long time to get going? Do you start to feel awake by about noon only to experience another slump in your energy level after lunch? Do you feel better by the end of the day, but feel as though you must go to bed as you tire easily? Once in bed, do you lie awake, exhausted but too wired to go to sleep? Once asleep, do wake up after only a few hours, and find this cycle continuing night after night? Are you lacking the stamina to exercise during the day, or feel totally drained after exercising? Perhaps you pick up every infection going around – and take a very long time to recover. Despair and depression may even be have set in. For too many people, this fatigue and weakness are a constant part of daily life.

If the picture painted here sounds familiar, read on ... you may be experiencing Adrenal Fatigue. It is estimated that up to 80% of people in the industrialized world suffer from Adrenal Fatigue at some point in their lives. For some, it may last a few days, for others, this debilitating condition can last decades. The problem is most common among women, and is often ignored or misdiagnosed as main symptoms mirror those of other conditions. Adrenal fatigue affects people in many different ways and for many different reasons. Although the etiology (cause) of Adrenal Fatigue may differ, the symptoms, regardless of the cause are very similar. Adrenal Fatigue occurs when the adrenal glands function on a sub-optimal level. The adrenals are responsible for secreting 50 different hormones in an exact and very precise manner depending on the body's requirements. Adrenal glands become the major source of hormone production in a menopausal woman and will secrete hormones such as estrogen, progesterone, testosterone, cortisol, and adrenaline.

Adrenal glands are very responsive to changes in physical, emotional and psychological stressors, and many factors may interfere with this amazingly intricate balance. Stress, for example will put your body into a "fight or flight" response, however, your adrenals cannot differentiate between different types of stressors such as being attacked by a tiger in the jungle or having a heated argument with your boss. The adrenal gland responds by producing cortisol – the major hormone responsible for helping the body deal with stress. Unfortunately, in today's modern society, most of us are under constant stress – be it physical stress from infection or illness, or emotional stress such as from a divorce or the death of a loved one. The adrenal gland will adjust to this constant and prolonged stress but may eventually become unable to meet the demand and dysfunction either by not producing enough cortisol, or by releasing too much cortisol. The extremes of adrenal dysfunction are Addison's disease (no cortisol produced) and Cushing's Syndrome (excessive cortisol released).

You may notice subtle changes at first: salt and sugar cravings may give you occasional relief. You may constantly need a caffeine fix via coffee or cola, you may become absentminded, have weak muscles, have low sex drive, feel that you cannot get enough sleep, you also may have constipation alternating with diarrhea. You eventually reduce activity and try to avoid any stressful situation because you feel overwhelmed. You are starting to isolate. Unless your situation is addressed properly, you may develop adult onset diabetes, autoimmune disorders, chronic fatigue, hypoglycemia (in fact most people suffering from hypoglycemia have low adrenal function) and even fibromyalgia. Many people will suffer from anxiety and depression, have problems with concentration, with periods of confusion, searching for words, making mistakes with names and simple math. Most women with sub-optimal adrenals will complain of PMS, terrible menopausal symptoms and a decrease in immune function.