

ADRENAL HEALTH

For women who have never been so healthy and felt so bad!

Your local ND can help you diagnose and treat Adrenal Insufficiency using safe, effective natural therapies.

- Are You FRUSTRATED because you are doing everything right but still feel crummy?
- Does your doctor tell you that nothing is wrong because your blood tests are normal?
- Do you eat healthy, exercise regularly, go to bed on time, take natural supplements but feel like they are not helping you feel better?

Are You:

- Tired all the time?
- Unrefreshed upon waking? Need coffee to get going?
- Anxious, irritable or depressed?
- Pressed for time and overwhelmed, often out of proportion to the situation?
- Having more difficulty tolerating stress than before?
- Experiencing stronger PMS regularly?
- Craving salt or carbohydrates more often than usual?
- Experiencing frequent headaches?
- Having more allergic reactions, infections or skin irritations?
- Noticing more muscle pain out of proportion to your physical activity?
- Developing shoulder, neck and/or more back pain?
- Experiencing heart fluttering, lightheadedness, dizziness upon rising, weakness, fainting?
- More often confused, overwhelmed and forgetful?
- Developing poor digestion, appetite and/or IBS?
- Having difficulty getting to sleep or staying asleep?
- Feeling tired but wired?
- Lately noticing less tolerance for alcohol or caffeine?
- Sweating profusely day or night?
- Feeling like your body no longer regulates body temperature well?
- Loosing hair or have very dry skin?



Then:

YOU MIGHT BE SUFFERING FROM AN ADRENAL GLAND (AG) PROBLEM!

What is the Adrenal Gland?

- The body has two adrenal glands.
- They each sit on top of the kidneys in the mid-back, just under the last two ribs.

Why are the AGs important?

- The AG's help us respond to stress.
- Psychological and physical stress equally require adrenal hormones to be secreted into the blood stream to help us respond, adapt and address a stressful situation.
- For example, the AGs release adrenaline and cortisol, which function to release glucose, fat and protein into the blood stream to give us energy to "fight" stress.
- These hormones also increase your heart rate, breathing, focus, concentration, and muscle tension (readiness) to prepare us to address stress.
- The AG's also release other substances on a regular basis to regulate fluid and electrolyte balance in the body.

IN GENERAL THE PURPOSE OF THE AGs ARE TO SUPPORT AN APPROPRIATE PHYSIOLOGICAL STRESS RESPONSE, WHILE PREVENTING BODY & MIND BREAKDOWN.

What Causes AG Problems?

- To understand the cause of AG problems, it is helpful to recognize the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) developed by Hans Selye, former director of Experimental Medicine and Surgery at the Université de Montréal. He performed an integrated analysis of the effects of stress on adrenal gland function.
- His studies provide clinicians insight into how stress-induced illnesses arise and how to

manage stress related conditions in their patients.

According to Selye, there are three stages to the stress response:

1. Alarm Phase (Acute Stress)
2. Resistance Phase (Chronic Stress)
3. Exhaustion Phase (Burn Out).

Stress includes not only psychological stress, but also any insult to the body that may tax adrenal gland function including: chronic infections, allergies, exposure to chemical toxins, use of stimulants or drug-like substances (caffeine, nicotine, marijuana), physical trauma such as a car accident. Other contributing factors include prolonged or repeated prednisone/corticosteroid use and poor eating or sleep habits.

1. Alarm Phase (Acute Stress):

- This is when a stress is first encountered and an alarm is sounded in the body, often referred to as the "fight or flight" response. Hormonally, the AG's release cortisol and adrenaline. This is a normal defense mechanism that serves a critical function by stimulating the body/mind to respond to the threat at hand.
- Once this phase is over, the body goes through a 24-48 hour period of recovery, during which one desires primarily to rest.
- Prolonged Alarm Phase reactions can lead to illness due to immunosuppression and is seen in people suffering from conditions such as chronic anxiety and PTSD.

2. Resistance Phase (Chronic Stress):

- **Due to the challenges of modern life, for many people, the perceived stressors are not short-term but chronic.**
- Levels of cortisol and adrenalin stay elevated. In this phase a person is at risk of developing infections, allergies, autoimmune conditions, high blood pressure and blood sugar, heart disease, diabetes, depression and osteoporosis.

3. Exhaustion Phase (Burn Out):

- Chronic Stress can eventually lead to burn out. In this phase there is deficient release of cortisol, adrenalin and other important AG hormones.
- Adrenal exhaustion is associated with decreased resistance to stress and can lead to allergies, chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, multiple chemical sensitivities, IBS, low blood pressure, insomnia, low thyroid function, lack of motivation and anxiety disorders.

ADRENAL INSUFFICIENCY IS COMMON IN WESTERN CULTURE DUE TO HIGH AMOUNTS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS AND ENVIRONMENTAL TOXINS.

Can AG problems be detected through blood testing?

- Yes. Blood tests can be used to measure circulating hormone levels related to adrenal function. However, in most cases of adrenal fatigue, since there is a wide variation in what's considered to be normal levels, many symptomatic patients may not show any irregularities, because the cause is a functional lack of adrenal reserve, as opposed to an outright deficiency – such as in a condition known as Addison's Disease.
- Nevertheless, some routine blood screenings can pick up on a patient's adrenal insufficiency and indicate the following:
low sodium, high potassium, high or normal BUN, high eosinophils, low or normal cortisol.
- However, the best test to detect adrenal insufficiency is Salivary Cortisol. It is non-invasive and easy to do!
- The best way to use saliva testing is to measure cortisol levels four times per day (waking, noon, afternoon and evening).
- A Salivary Test is a "spit test". The patient will spit into a test tube four-times in one day to complete the cortisol test requirements. The patient is sent home with a test kit from their ND. A test like this costs approximately \$250.00

and may be covered by your health plan, as it is prescribed by your ND.

- MD's in this area, do not typically order Salivary Cortisol Tests.

How can my local ND help with Adrenal Problems?

- Your ND will help you discover the underlying cause of your adrenal gland condition and employ safe, effective natural medicine and therapies to help your AG's heal and restore optimal function.
- Your ND will take a thorough health history, physical exam and order lab work to assess your overall health and determine a proper adrenal gland diagnosis, while prescribing an individualized treatment plan specific to your needs.
- ND's prescribe a combination of natural vitamins, minerals, herbs and homeopathics aimed to help your adrenal glands heal themselves and work more effectively.
- ND's also provide lifestyle counselling for diet/nutrition, exercise, sleep and stress-coping strategies important for adrenal and total body health.
- Your ND may also recommend complimentary treatments such as: Acupuncture, Osteopathy, or Massage to improve your adrenal condition.

Natural Ways to Care for Your Adrenal Glands.

1. Healthy Stress Coping.

Discover healthy ways to manage stress. Some well researched examples include: daily meditation (even 5 minutes per day!), yoga, cognitive behavioural therapy, journaling, self-nurturing activities (SNA). Some of my favourite SNA's include: long easy walks in nature with my dog, soaking in an Epsom salt bath, listening to calming classical music while reading a fictional novel, talking to a trusted friend.

Your ND will help you discover your best and healthiest stress coping strategies.

2. Nutrition.

Avoid:

Processed, preservative and sugar-laden foods. These substances harm the body and burden the adrenal glands interfering with proper functioning.

Consume:

A whole foods diet, consisting of organic vegetables and fruit, beans, nuts, seeds, grains and organic animal products such as dairy, eggs and meat.

Limit:

Stimulants, drugs and carbohydrates such as: caffeine, nicotine, marijuana and “white” carbohydrates (bread, cereal, crackers, cookies, baked goods, and pasta). These substances strain the adrenal glands and make them “work harder” leading to burn out and reduced stress tolerance.

Increase:

Healthy fats and protein such as fish, coconut, avocado, nuts, seeds, meat and wild game, eggs, goat milk products, some dairy and healthy oils (2-4 tbsp per day of either: olive, flax, avocado, coconut, grapeseed, walnut, or sunflower oils). People with adrenal insufficiency do better with a diet low on complex carbs, yet abundant in a variety of vegetables, fruits, healthy fats and proteins.

Eat Regularly:

Skipping meals and snacks stresses the adrenal glands. Eat three meals and three snacks per day to keep blood sugar regular, thus supporting adrenal healing and health.

3. Lifestyle.

Sleep!

- Get eight to nine hours of sleep per night.
- Take a 20 minute power nap mid-afternoon when possible.
- The most ideal sleep routine for healthy adrenal glands is 10pm to 6am.
- Keep your sleep routine regular, even on weekends.

- Irregular sleep patterns strain the adrenal glands.
- If you have insomnia, seek help from your local ND to restore your natural sleep biology, which may be caused by adrenal burn out!

Moderate aerobic exercise, full spectrum light, and stress management support proper adrenal gland function.

However, over-exercise can deplete the adrenal glands. A good rule of thumb to follow is:

- If you feel better after physical/aerobic activity then keep up your routine.
- If you feel worse: more tired, worn out, weaker, experience sore muscles and joints after physical activity then change your workouts to something less strenuous and less often.

Your ND will help you design an activity plan unique to your needs and one that restores your adrenal glands but keeps you feeling strong and fit!

4. Natural Medicines.

- B-vitamins, Vitamin C, D, iron, omega three fats, magnesium, copper, zinc and chromium support AG healing and efficiency.
- Adding a pinch of salt to one or two meals, or even your water bottle, per day is important for people with adrenal insufficiency.
- There are some remarkable herbs for AG health and much scientific research has been dedicated to understanding the medicinal affect of the following herbs on AG restoration:

Ashwaganda

Licorice

Astragalus

Eleuthrococcus

Rhodiola

Schisandra

Please seek guidance from your local ND before taking natural supplements and herbs.

Your ND will help you determine what the best natural medicines and therapies are for you to help you heal from adrenal gland problems so you can

get back to life feeling vital, strong and healthy again!



Heidi McGill is a registered doctor of naturopathic medicine. She has owned and operated Healing Foundations since November 2006. She has helped dozens of families discover their best balance for overall wellness in body and mind, using the principles and practices of naturopathic medicine. Dr. Heidi regularly appears as “Guelph’s Naturopathic Expert” on Inside Guelph a local Roger’s T.V. program. She also writes articles on topics that matter to you. Dr. Heidi is focused on educating you about how your body functions in combination with the natural and cultural environment. She is genuinely passionate about guiding you towards optimal health, vitality and more joy in your life.

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