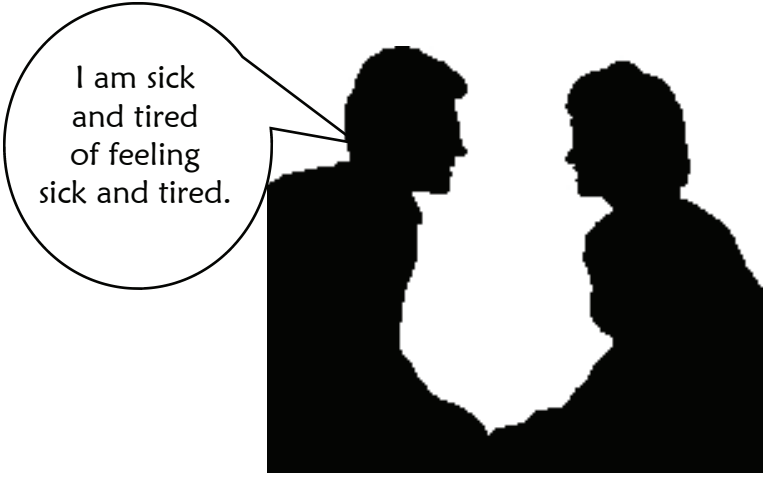


Adrenal Stress Disorder



I am sick
and tired
of feeling
sick and tired.

The adrenal glands are located over each kidney and are important for many bodily functions. They are instrumental in managing stress in the body, but it is possible for them to be overwhelmed by it. There are 3 categories of stress that strongly affect the adrenal glands:

1. Physical Stress—Examples are vertebral subluxation from lifting, congenital scoliosis, sitting in a bad chair, lack of exercise.
2. Nutritional or Chemical Stress—Examples are excessive use of stimulants (sugar, caffeine, nicotine, alcohol), poor diet, bad air quality.
3. Emotional or Psychological Stress — Examples are recent death or illness of a relative or friend, dislike of job, excess worry.

A condition prevalent today is adrenal stress disorder (ASD; also called functional hypoadrenia). This is not a disease process as such; it is a condition in which a particular gland—the adrenal—is incapable of meeting all the demands placed upon it. Since the adrenal glands are responsible for many actions, this condition may cause a myriad of symptoms—fatigue, dizziness, moodiness, mental anxiety and nervousness, joint pain, allergies, digestive disturbances, asthma, palpitations, back pain, mental sluggishness, headaches, impotency, colitis, chest pains, shakiness, skin conditions, hiatal hernia and on and on.

Most doctors today are concerned with disease processes. Because they are geared to thinking in terms of disease rather than functional problems, they do not recognize functional hypoadrenia until it becomes full-blown Addison's disease—a complete failure of the adrenal glands to function. When Addison's disease is present, hormone medication is necessary to preserve life. Fortunately, Addison's disease is fairly rare, whereas functional hypoadrenia is very common in our society today. It is a condition in which the body is not functioning optimally, but a disease process is not present.

Standard laboratory tests may not reveal functional hypoadrenia. They are designed to find Addison's disease. Case history in conjunction with general clinical and applied kinesiology examinations can detect adrenal stress disorder very easily when the physician considers functional disorders as well as disease processes. The condition usually develops as a result of three factors: a) more demand—distress in many forms—placed on the adrenal glands than they are capable of handling, thus depleting their reserves; b) dietary indiscretions, and c) structural dysfunction within the body.

Hans Selye, M.D., researched this condition in the 1920s and 30s, providing the basis for our current understanding. He described the general adaptation syndrome (GAS) of adrenal stress disorder, which consists of three stages. The first stage is the **alarm reaction**, which is a call to arms of the body's defense mechanisms—provided by the adrenal glands—against stress. The alarm reaction is present during any stress, whether it is emotional, an injury, a demand to fight, or any upsetting factor. The second stage is that of **resistance**, which occurs when the stress that activated the alarm stage is present for a prolonged period. The adrenal glands actually grow in size to meet the demand of the long-term stress. Third is the **exhaustion stage**, during which the adrenal glands become depleted. This is the stage of adrenal stress disorder. This is when symptoms are most evident. The body has had enough and is extremely run down.

Adrenal stress disorder is responsible for so many symptoms that many doctors not knowledgeable in its diagnosis and treatment have classified patients with this condition as hypochondriacs, or as having “nervous” conditions, and have given them tranquilizers or mood elevator medications. To better understand why there are so many symptoms, let's look at the major classifications of hormones produced by the adrenal glands.

Adrenal Cortex

The adrenal cortex is the outside portion of the adrenal glands that produces three major types of hormones.

1. **Glucocorticoids** are responsible for converting fats and protein for use as sugar in the body, and they release stored sugar. This activity helps prevent low blood sugar. Glucocorticoids also act as anti-inflammatory hormones and help prevent rheumatoid arthritis, colitis, duodenal or gastric ulcers, rhinitis, sinusitis, bronchitis, hay fever, asthma, chronic upper respiratory infections, skin rashes, and/or other inflammatory disorders that do not serve a useful purpose. The problem with using cortisone from an external medication is that it suppresses the adrenal's own production of its own adrenaline and makes it weaker.
2. **Sex corticoids** are the male and female hormones, testosterone and estrogen. The female hormone, estrogen, is produced by the adrenal in very small quantities compared to the production by the ovaries; however, it is thought that this hormone is important to balance in the menopausal female.
3. **Mineralocorticoids** play a major role in the mineral balance of the body. Minerals that are out of balance affect the body's fluid balance, including the fluid inside and outside body cells. Blood volume is also affected. The mineralocorticoids are the body's pro-inflammatory hormones, working with the glucocorticoids to help keep inflammatory processes in check.

Adrenal Medulla

The inside portion of the adrenal gland secretes two types of hormones. The first, epinephrine—sometimes called adrenaline, our body's own cortisone—has been known for a long time; it is the hormone primarily correlating with the "fight or flight" mechanism, enabling an individual to fight stress. Epinephrine and norepinephrine from the adrenal medulla help mobilize sugar from storage and control the autonomic nervous system. Since sugar is needed by nearly all the body, and since the autonomic nervous system controls the body's organs and glands, you can see the wide range of the adrenal medulla's effect.

Along with the actions noted above, the adrenal gland plays an integral role in the symphonic balance of the glandular system. It stimulates some glands and, in turn, others glands stimulate it. Failure of any gland tends to throw the entire glandular system off balance.

People inherit their glandular patterns much the same as they inherit facial characteristics and body builds. Some people inherit very strong adrenal patterns that make them capable of abusing the adrenal glands with many forms of stress and/or dietary indiscretions without having health problems. Others, unfortunately, inherit weak adrenal patterns, allowing the cumulative factors of stress to cause health problems rather quickly and easily. When functional hypoadrenia is diagnosed in a person, it should be suspected that because of genetics his/her children, aunts, uncles, and other relatives might have the same conditions, causing some of their health problems.



What can be done about the problem?



Fortunately, there are effective methods of correction available for adrenal stress disorder. First the condition must be recognized and the causative factors found. The 10-Step Protocol to Wellness allows us to see if you have adrenals that need support. This evaluation system also enables us to find the exact cause of the adrenal stress disorder. Treatment consists of certain procedures you must do for yourself, which may include reduction of stress, dietary changes, nutritional supplementation, and other less frequently involved factors. We will evaluate your nervous system, nutritional requirements, and stress involvement, and will suggest appropriate changes.

When adrenal stress disorder is present, a person tends to consume large quantities of adrenal stimulants and carbohydrates such as sugar and starch. Whenever there is stimulation, depression follows which eventually needs more stimulation. This continuing cycle may eventually lead to addiction.

In order to rebuild the adrenals, it is necessary to withdraw from stimulants such as caffeine, cigarettes, alcohol, and sugar. Be careful—caffeine is present in many over-the-counter medicines such as aspirin compounds, cold medications, and pain-relief drugs, and sugar is added to many foods. The adrenal glands cannot rebuild when they are constantly being stimulated.

If the condition has been present for a long time, a rebuilding program is necessary. Persist with the corrective approach prescribed, and you will no longer be a victim of the condition described by Selye as "just being sick."