

Adrenal Support Foods - To Assist with Elevated Stress and Cortisol

What Really is Chronic Stress?

Chronic stress is a major source contributing to on-going fatigue, exhaustion, moodiness, poor nutrition and hormonal imbalance. Unfortunately, many of us manage stress by dosing up on caffeine, sugary snacks, alcohol and even sleeping aids to help feel better, each of which can further disrupt our body's natural rhythms.

How Chronic Stress Effects Us?

Research shows that when we experience chronic stress, our *adrenal glands* (walnut-sized organs sitting just above our kidneys) that modulate the stress response, as well as regulate other hormones, suffer. The adrenal glands produce many hormones that regulate our body's functioning, including cortisol, a hormone activated when our stress levels rise, signaling our body to enter a heightened state of emergency. But high cortisol levels are intended to be short term, not remain elevated. Since our adrenals do not know the difference between stressors, they can continue to work hard to do their jobs, whether we are stressed due to a true emergency or are simply stressed out.

Why it's Important to Pay Attention to Elevated Stress Levels and Adrenal Function?

With chronically elevated cortisol it is common to see interferences with immune function, digestion, sleep, and even the ability to produce other essential hormones such as estrogen, progesterone, testosterone and even thyroid hormone occur. This can lead to high blood pressure, high blood sugar, excess abdominal fat, and inflammation. In the meantime, our health is compromised, along with our moods, and even our sex drive.

What You Can Do Now to Support Your Adrenal Function:

1. Timing meals and amounts we eat, can help regulate and support cortisol's natural rhythms. Eating larger meals earlier in the day naturally helps support cortisol levels, while eating smaller, lighter meals at the end of the day helps maintain hormonal balance. Eating regularly will prevent dramatic drops in blood sugar and support our body's natural functioning
2. Eat breakfast within an hour of getting up, or by 8 am to restore blood sugar levels that were depleted during the night.
3. Eat a healthy snack between 9 and 10 am and 2 and 3 pm to help off-set the natural cortisol dip that occurs around 3 or 4 pm. Many people notice this dip

every day and reach for extra caffeine or carbohydrate-loaded snacks, which will actually impede hormonal balance.

4. Eat a nutritious, light snack an hour before bed, but be sure to avoid refined sugars. Nut butters with a little fresh fruit or a small bit of cheese or yogurt are ideal choices.
5. Use fresh, organic, whole, locally grown plant-based and seasonal foods for meals and snacks. Ideas? Vegetables: Arugula, artichokes, asparagus, bok choy, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower (yellow and purple too!), celery, cucumbers, eggplant, fennel, garlic, green leafy, jicama, kale, leeks, lettuce (red, green, romaine), mushrooms, okra. Eat as much color as you can to offer phyto-chemical/anti-oxidant advantages.
6. Consume lean protein with each meal and snack to help stabilize blood sugar and stave off cravings for refined sugars and caffeine.
7. Sip bone broth to nourish the liver and kidneys.
8. Use healthy fats and oils from nuts and seeds like almonds, chia, flax, macadamia nuts, pistachios, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, and fruits such as avocados, coconuts, olives. Cook with oils and fats such as extra virgin olive oil, avocado oil, coconut oil, organic and pasture raised butter, lard and tallow from organic and pasture raised animals. (Salads are best tossed with extra virgin olive oil or avocado oil)
9. Utilize spices such as cumin, curry, garlic, ginger, fennel, mustard, pepper, red pepper flakes, sea-salt, and turmeric. They are all beneficial for inflammation, all around body functions, and are amazingly delicious as well.
10. Watch all of your personal care items, as they may have [xenoestrogens](#), endocrine disruptors that have estrogen-like effects in the body. Build up of xenoestrogens have been indicated in many conditions including: breast, prostate and testicular cancer, obesity, infertility, endometriosis, early onset puberty, miscarriages and diabetes.