

What Stress Does to Your Body

I remember the first time I heard the term Adrenal Fatigue.

I was on the phone with a doctor who had done some testing for me while we were Stateside in early 2009.

I didn't fully understand what we were testing. All I knew was that he came highly recommended in the field of female hormones and was working with us in the aftermath of my first two miscarriages to determine how my hormone levels may be affecting my ability to carry a pregnancy to full-term.

The test results were back.

Adrenal Fatigue.

What in the world did that mean and how did I get it?

He carefully explained it to me, and while I grasped the serious tone of voice, I still didn't understand fully how this affected me, my health, or even what really caused Adrenal Fatigue.

But I wanted to know everything about it.

Since that day, I have committed myself to much research: both about Adrenal Fatigue and about recovery.

But how did I get it? That remains a mystery. It could have been through any number of things. I had battled mononucleosis in Bible school and my diet had been poor at that time. I had also worked 4 part-time jobs while juggling too many classes.

But the likely candidate was an abusive relationship I had been in for 16 months. Engaged to a guy who from day one began to verbally and psychologically abuse me, I chose to leave him for the third and final time four months prior to our wedding. I walked away from him and never looked back.

But the sudden release of all that fear and trauma was too much as within a week odd symptoms began to crop up: Large hives covered my arms and legs and I was forced to take a leave of absence from work. From then on a slow breakdown in my health began to occur. Only two years later I boarded a one-way plane for Croatia. The following 12-months would be a grueling lesson in how to endure language courses, visa-troubles and navigation in a strange city.

The trauma of the abusive relationship combined with the overwhelming stress of moving to a new country, learning a new language and integrating into a new culture is likely what brought me to that moment on the phone as the words “Adrenal Fatigue” were uttered.

Yet—had those been the only two stressful moments in the nine years between entering an abusive relationship and the phone call, I would likely not be here. No, it all exacerbated by all of the additional stress I faced in that time. I could fill volumes and months of blog posts talking about the stress I endured in those years. Yet, that would accomplish nothing.

It's not the fact that I *had* stress, it was that I didn't know how to *handle* stress. I didn't know how to say no (*I wrote more about stress here*).

I was my own worst enemy.

What Is Adrenal Fatigue?

First you need to know what your adrenal glands are. They are small endocrine glands that sit above your kidneys. Their primary function is to help your body deal with stress. There are two parts to the adrenal gland: The outer part is vital as it produces the hormones cortisol and aldosterone. The inner part produces adrenaline.

What do these hormones do?

We know that adrenaline is the “fight or flight” hormone. It is what enables our body to react in emergency situations with a strength that we may not otherwise have. We gain sudden clarity and a burst of energy. It’s not essential for life everyday, but it can sure save our life when we need it. We can call this “blow torch”.

Cortisol is the slow burn to adrenaline’s blow torch. Cortisol is what helps support your body under more long-term stressful situations: a parent dying of cancer, an addicted child in recovery. Long-term, but with an end in sight. It is also what regulates our metabolism.

Aldosterone is what regulates our blood pressure.

Now that we know what the adrenals do, what is Adrenal Fatigue?

Simply put, Adrenal Fatigue is when our adrenal glands are depleted of cortisol. That slow-burn hormone.

This occurs when cortisol is daily released into the blood stream.

You see, the body was never meant to release stress-hormones into the blood stream on a daily basis. The adrenal glands store them up so that when they are needed, there is a supply enough of cortisol to support the body long-term. When that supply is exhausted, and the body has come to rely on cortisol being there—for whatever reason—problems begin to occur.

There are a number of symptoms a person experiences with Adrenal Fatigue, and because they mask other problems most times they do not realize the source of the problem.

Let me take a moment and address something:

Most medical doctors do not recognize Adrenal Fatigue as an genuine problem or diagnosis. They will work to try to resolve some of the symptoms of Adrenal Fatigue, such as thyroid

dysfunction, diabetes or depression. Yet, if the underlying issue as to why these symptoms have occurred are not addressed, the root of the problem will remain the same.

Before we discount Adrenal Fatigue as a legitimate diagnosis, let us remember other diagnoses that the medical community was slow to accept, such as Fibromyalgia.

What Are the Symptoms of Adrenal Fatigue?

- * Chronic Fatigue
- * Insomnia
- * Inability to handle stress
- * Weight gain
- * Arthritis
- * Brain fog
- * Inability to concentrate
- * Salt cravings
- * Sudden burst of energy in the evening
- * Weak immune system
- * Allergies
- * Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- * Low libido
- * Low blood pressure
- * Low blood sugar

How Can I find Out if I Have Adrenal Fatigue?

The best way to test for Adrenal Fatigue is through a cortisol/DHEAS saliva test.

A saliva sample is taken 4 times during the day and then sent to a lab to test the levels of various hormones present in the sample at key times of the day to measure their rise and fall

against what should be the norm.

While some people diagnose adrenal fatigue based solely on the symptoms alone, in order to properly treat whatever may be wrong, one does need to have an accurate diagnosis from a professional.

If your medical doctor does not recognize Adrenal Fatigue as a legitimate medical problem, consider seeing a naturopath.

What if I Have Adrenal Fatigue?

I am so glad you're here! In the days to come we will talk about four things you need to do to overcome Adrenal Fatigue naturally:

- * Stress management and sleep
- * Vitamins and supplements
- * Food and diet
- * Exercise

Dear reader, if you remember, in January I talked about the fact that one of the things I wanted to do in 2015 was to get healthy. I have made that a commitment that I am keeping. I can't wait to share on Friday about how I am recovering. It is my belief that many people suffer from chronic stress, and while many may not suffer with Adrenal Fatigue, chronic stress is a epidemic in our society that has fed us the lie that we must do it all and do it all well.

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