
Hypercortisolism

Your adrenal glands sit on top of the kidneys and secrete important hormones: cortisol, adrenaline, and dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA). These hormones help you to buffer stress and adapt to everyday life demands by determining the stress response. Chronic stress can lead to prolonged elevations of cortisol, resulting in hypercortisolism.

SYMPTOMS OF HYPERCORTISOLISM

- Diminished immune function
- Depletion of cortisol, resulting in low blood sugar
- Less restful sleep
- Increased lipid levels of blood fats
- Water retention
- Loss of cellular potassium, a very important mineral
- Lowered insulin sensitivity, with a higher susceptibility to diabetes
- Loss of the capacity to produce sufficient DHEA

Under stress, healthy adrenals increase their output of cortisol and DHEA to enable you to preserve health. They also secrete adrenaline, giving you a boost of energy when needed. Under chronic stress, the adrenals can no longer keep up with the demand, and DHEA levels begin to fall, signifying adrenal exhaustion. In addition, the oversecretion of cortisol and adrenaline can cause you to feel anxious and nervous. Complaints of insomnia, fatigue, depression, irritability, blood sugar imbalance, and digestive difficulties are also common.

Functions of Cortisol

- Converts proteins into energy by increasing amino acids in the bloodstream
- Stimulates the liver to convert amino acids to glucose as needed for energy
- Counters inflammation and allergies
- Helps maintain blood pressure
- Aids in stress reactions

Functions of DHEA

- Precursor to testosterone and estrogen
- Improves resistance to viruses, bacteria, parasites, allergies, and cancer
- Prevents osteoporosis
- Lowers total and LDL cholesterol
- Increases muscle mass and decreases body fat

Restoration

- Determine trigger foods and avoid them.
- Avoid refined sugars, caffeine, and alcohol in the diet.
- Eat several small meals containing protein each day.
- Consume ginseng and/or licorice tea for support.
- Get adequate vitamin C.

- Get adequate sleep and go to bed by 10:00 pm.
- Use stress management techniques.
- Deal with emotions as needed with laughter, breathing, and/or professional help.
- Engage in light exercise.
- Get daily exposure to outdoor light.

