

Bouncing Back From the Effects of Fatigue

by Dr. Don Colbert

You know the symptoms...always tired, often sluggish, irritable and short tempered, and an overall loss of energy and enthusiasm. These are some of the more common side effects of someone suffering from chronic fatigue. Other symptoms often include development of allergies, becoming forgetful, and a decreased sex drive.

The most common symptom that I find in people with chronic adrenal fatigue (CAF) is the complaint of a “low energy level.” Patients with CAF often have problems getting up in the morning; they have peak times of sleepiness in the early morning and again in the afternoon between three and five o’clock. They typically rely on coffee or soda to give them the energy they need to make it through the day. Many suffer from mild depression. Other symptoms include low blood sugar, light headedness when going from lying to a standing positions, sugar cravings, reduced sex drive, and difficulty making decisions. They also tend to lose their train of thought rather easily and are prone to gain weight and lose their joy.

Although none of these symptoms by themselves would warrant a diagnosis of adrenal fatigue, having a number of these symptoms present simultaneously should raise the question of possibility.

Understanding the Problem

Chronic adrenal fatigue has been recognized medically for over a hundred years. Unfortunately, most physicians have never heard of the condition because it is usually not taught in medical school. Consequently, they don’t test for it or treat it.

Basically, CAF results from the adrenal glands not functioning properly. Our adrenal glands are about the size of a large grape and are located on top of our kidneys. They produce and secrete a number of hormones in the body, including male and female sex hormones. Their main function, however, is to release stress-relieving hormones that enable the body to cope with stress — the main one being cortisol.

Living and working in stressful conditions over an extended period causes the adrenal glands to work over time. Eventually, they get “tired,” and fatigue sets in. Once fatigue sets in, a person seems to stay in a perpetual state of exhaustion. Even simple tasks seem to wear them out, and life in general often becomes overwhelming and/or depressing.

The interesting thing about our cortisol level is that it must be maintained — it cannot be too high or too low. Too little cortisol in our body makes us vulnerable to inflammation and hypoglycemia. Too much cortisol in our system and we become vulnerable to developing autoimmune diseases, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and a lower immunity to viruses, bacteria, and even cancer.

Understanding the Cause

Most chronic adrenal fatigue is caused by excessive, long-term stress. Of course, some stress is good and often motivates us to make decisions and take appropriate actions. However, too much stress for too long is unhealthy and can be deadly.

I have seen CAF develop in people from all walks of life — from a college student who is under pressure to study and perform well academically, to a school teacher trying to better his family by taking a second job to supplement his income. People who are constantly “burning the candle at both ends” by trying to do too much in too little time are more than likely to develop CAF. It’s like driving your car as fast as you can all of the time... even having the engine revved while sitting at a red light. Eventually, you are either going

to burn the motor out or you are going to run out of gas. For some, CAF takes months or years to show up.

For others, the symptoms show up quickly. Other causes for CAF include traumatic events like divorce, bankruptcy, death of a family member, a major injury, or a major move. Lifestyle choices, such as a poor diet and lack of sleep can bring about CAF. Another major cause is having deadly emotions that have developed as a result of emotional and mental stress. Anger, guilt, fear, anxiety, bitterness, unforgiveness, and grief are just a few of the deadly emotions we must learn to recognize and work through properly.

Understanding the Cure

If you have a number of the symptoms of chronic adrenal fatigue, don't run to the doctor and ask him to treat the symptoms. Instead, ask him to give you an adrenal salivary hormone test to determine if you have CAF. If your cortisol levels are high, stage one adrenal fatigue is usually diagnosed. If your cortisol levels are very low, you probably have stage three adrenal fatigue. You can work with your doctor to develop a plan to restore your adrenal function.

Here are some effective things to consider.

There are a number of SUPPLEMENTS available to help. A good multivitamin and mineral supplement is critical. Some of the most important nutrients are B vitamins, especially B5, also known as pantothenic acid. B vitamins are generally found in grains, vegetables, fruits, seeds, and nuts. Adequate amounts of vitamin C are also important. They are more concentrated in the adrenal glands than anywhere else in the body. Magnesium is also vital. It is involved in the activation of over 300 different enzymes in the body. When your cortisol level is high, there is also an increase of urinary excretion of magnesium. This creates a greater need for magnesium.

Some herbal supplements to consider include rhodiola, magnolia bark, and licorice root. Magnolia bark and licorice root have been used in food and medicinal remedies for thousands of years. Magnolia extract has the ability to decrease stress and create a calming effect for the nerves. Licorice has proven to help endurance, energy, and vitality. These herbs are usually available in capsules and liquid extracts.

Some Final Recommendations

In addition, sleep is also extremely important to overcoming fatigue. Those suffering from CAF need eight to nine hours a night. It is also important to maintain a healthy diet: Decrease or avoid foods that are high in sugar, highly processed foods, fried foods, and foods that contain hydrogenated fats. Instead, choose living foods, such as fresh fruits and vegetables. Drink two quarts of filtered water a day, and avoid drinking beverages with caffeine.

I also encourage you to add margin to your life. Margin is a "safety zone," buffer, or cushion of time we add before, after, and in between activities. Margin keeps you from feeling overloaded and stressed out. Learn to laugh more at yourself and life. Develop an attitude of gratitude by choosing on purpose to think of things you are thankful for. And lastly, learn to let go of the offenses of others and forgive them...as quickly as you can.

For more detailed information on the subjects addressed here, please refer to my books *What Would Jesus Eat*, *What You Don't Know May Be Killing You*, *Toxic Relief*, *Deadly Emotions*, and my newest publication, *Stress Less*.

STRESS-RELIEVING NUTRIENTS Optimum Daily Intake

Vitamin B1 50-100 mg
Vitamin B2 15-50 mg
Vitamin B3 15-50 mg

Vitamin B5 50-100 mg
Vitamin B6 50-100 mg
Vitamin B12 200-400 mcg
Biotin 400-800 mcg

Folic acid 400-800 mcg
Vitamin C 500-1000mg
Magnesium 300-600mg
Rhodiola 200-600mg