

Adrenal Fatigue

The single greatest contributor to adrenal fatigue, or adrenal burnout, is stress, which comes in many forms including emotional, physical, conscious, and subconscious. Stress directly affects nearly everyone. It does not distinguish between race, social status, education, or blood type. The ultimate challenge would be identifying one person who is not stressed! It is not so much who is stressed, the question is who is not?

Stress:

- Promotes inflammation
- Increases anxiety and depression
- Suppresses immunity
- Encourages cancer growth
- Elevates blood pressure (which in turn raises the risk for strokes and heart attacks)
- Promote vascular disease
- Leads to insulin resistance
- Induces diabetes, and obesity
- Impairs cognitive and emotional circuits in the brain
- Elevates cortisol

Stress elevates the hormone **cortisol**: Cortisol elevation is common in individuals with blood sugar imbalances that are commonly found in obesity, Type II Diabetes, and cardiovascular disease, all of which are known to decrease life spans. Cortisol elevation throws fuel on proinflammatory disease like IBS, Crohn's, Lupus, Multiple Sclerosis, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Sjogren's, all dermatitis syndromes, etc. Cortisol imbalances is one of the primary causes of aging, and death. All inflammation throughout the body has a direct relationship with cortisol.

Autonomic Disorders and the Adrenal/Cortisol Stress Connection

Autoimmunity basically amounts to the body's assault on its own immune system. The very system that it is designed to defend. Most autoimmune diseases are considered idiopathic in nature, which basically means "We don't have a clue" or "Of unknown origin." So, naturally if a cause cannot be identified, how does one go about developing a cure or reversal of a disease? Considered untreatable by most physicians (endocrinologist included) due to the lack of adrenal fatigue syndrome education in the medical school's curriculum. The exception is Addison's disease, or full-blown adrenal exhaustion. Which if left untreated could result in death. According to Tabor's Encyclopedic Medical Dictionary, chronic maintenance of Addison's disease requires an increased dose of hormone replacement steroids during times of increased mental and physical stress. Because stress may precipitate a crisis, discuss stress management with the patient. That is their treatment plan for the absolute worst-case scenario of adrenal exhaustion/drugs and stress management. So, let's dig deeper for a cause, and a treatment focused on a resolution. I personally believe nearly 100% of autonomic disorders have a connection between mind and body and are not idiopathic after all, they do however have a connection to prolonged nutritional and lifestyle health issues (usually associated with sub-threshold inflammation), that are primarily diet induced and exacerbated by a deep-rooted stress response. Perhaps the most frustrating problem associated with Autonomic

disorders is the prolonged course between the onset of symptoms and a diagnosis, which can sometimes be years.

Due to lack of specific health markers for detection, such as blood tests, physical exams, or image studies (like X-ray or MRI), resulting in further frustration and increased stress, anxiety, and full-blown illness before any proactive treatment is taken. If you are one of the lucky few, chances slim as they are, your endocrinologist may give you a diagnosis of an “Idiopathic hypothalamus disorder of which is most probably untreatable.” Again, not surprisingly, given adrenal fatigue and its complications, such as autonomic disorders, are no longer taught in most medical curriculum. There are no insurance ICD-10 codes to even bill for related treatment, therefore no reimbursement for treatment providers equals no treatment protocol, and ultimately no care plan. Sorry!

Stay strong, your treatment options will improve. The treatment protocols are out there, we will get to them shortly. A little more info first. These tiny little adrenal glands that sit above the kidneys are powerful regulators in the autonomic nervous system. As I mentioned earlier, full blown adrenal failure can result in death. Therefore, the adrenals will steal energy if necessary to function from surrounding endocrine glands (such as the thyroid, gonads, ovaries, etc.). You can survive without our ovary’s ladies, and we can live past a thyroidectomy, however this cannot be said of adrenal gland removal. Sadly, most treating physicians are left with very few treatment alternatives. Either biologics like Otezla, or Stelara, with their debilitating side effects (or should I say effects like more autoimmune disorders and worst cases death), or anti-depressant prescriptions which do nothing to address the underlying cause that provide only symptomatic relief at best.

Let’s look at some very interesting connections between adrenal fatigue and autoimmune disorder involving diet and hormones. In 1985, wheat was changed to ward off a world hunger famine. It was changed from a 4-foot Amber grain (as the song reflects), to a 2-foot dwarf that could be harvested at twice the frequency. This new grain also contained four times the gluten content. Interestingly, during this same time period autonomic disorders (such as multiple sclerosis, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, irritable bowel syndrome, and skin related inflammatory disorders) increased by nearly 200%!

Riddle me this mystery—70% or greater of autoimmune disease sufferers are women, many of which lead to disability and death. Lupus is nine times more likely to strike women, and Multiple Sclerosis is disproportionately greater in women. Rheumatoid arthritis is three times greater in women. My hypothesis is that there must be a link with the proinflammatory hormone estrogen, which is linked to most female cancers, and even prostate cancer in elderly males whose estrogen levels increase with age in line with prostate disorders. Add increased estrogen mimicking foods, like soy, and inflammatory glutens, and you are just adding fuel to the inflammatory flame. The result is H-P-A Axis dysregulation. The H-P Axis is the stress regulating feedback loop between the hypothalamus, pituitary, and adrenal glands. Could restoring optimal regulation to this feedback loop system be the holy grail for re-booting and restoring adrenal function, and ultimately getting a hold on this autonomic disorder effecting our quality of health? My clinical experiences have been wonderfully promising!