

GROUP VISIT TOOLKIT

Restoring the Balance: Stress Hormones and Health



Improve the health of your patients
with meaningful information

- *Easy to implement*
- *Cost-effective*
- *Time-efficient*
- *Insurance-friendly*

Your patients want to change... now you have the tools

This toolkit educates patients on the negative effects of chronic stress and its connection to major chronic diseases. Patients learn the connection between healthy vs. unhealthy stress perception, stages of general adaptation and optimal hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis function. With these tools, patients better understand the power of recommendations emphasizing glycemic regulation, sleep hygiene, exercise and cortisol/DHEA testing.

Use for patients with these issues:

- Sleep Disturbance
- Depression/Anxiety/Mood
- Hormone Imbalance/Infertility
- Thyroid Dysfunction
- Blood Sugar/Insulin Disorders
- Chronic Pain and Fatigue
- Palpitations/Arrhythmias
- Overweight/Obesity

THIS GROUP VISIT TOOLKIT INCLUDES:



Visit Forms:

Patient intake forms are designed to capture key information to create efficient, insurance-friendly patient encounters.



Patient Handout(s):

Patient-friendly handout(s) assist you and improve the implementation of key lifestyle tips necessary to correct underlying causes of illness.



Multi-Media Education:

Choose the format to best suit your presentation style

- Video + audio version
- Presentation slides for custom education

Ideal use for a Group Visit or one-on-one setting

Shilpa P. Saxena, MD is a Board-Certified Family Practice physician whose passion and purpose come to life through sharing her innovative patient education and practice management solutions in her classic 'keep it simple' style. She serves as Faculty with the Institute for Functional Medicine, the Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine, the University of Miami, Miller School of Medicine, and the Metabolic Medical Institute at George Washington University. Dr. Saxena is an expert in the Group Visit medical model, creator of Group Visit Toolkits, and co-author of *The Ingredients Matter: India*.



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Restoring the Balance: Stress Hormones & Health

Patient Name: _____

Date of visit: _____

_____ (initial) I understand as a participant in this Group Visit/Shared Medical Appointment, that I and other patients will discuss medical information in the presence of other patients, family members, staff, and the clinician. If I have medical concerns that are of a very private nature, I will request to discuss with the clinician in a private setting or will schedule an individual office visit. I will also respect the confidentiality of the other members of the group by not revealing medical, personal, or any other identifying information about others in attendance after the session is over.

CC (circle all that apply): Stress Reaction Anxiety Depression Palpitations High Blood Pressure
Sleep Disturbance Insomnia Fatigue Diabetes Sleep Apnea
Other _____

History of Present Illness:

- Date (or Year) of Diagnosis: _____ Unknown
- Stress Triggers Factors: (circle all that apply)
 - Work stressors (new job loss of job bad work environment)
 - Personal stressors (children relationship/marriage relocation change in health)
 - Financial stressors (new job loss of job change in income)
 - Sleep issues (hard to fall asleep hard to stay asleep excessive sleepiness)
- Do you feel stress worsens your symptoms? Yes No
- What relieves your symptoms (e.g. exercise, prayer, supplement, Rx)? _____

PERCEIVED STRESS SCALE (a tool which shows how well you are handling stress)

Rate yourself: 0=Never 1=Almost Never 2=Sometimes 3=Fairly Often 4=Very Often

In the last month (circle one number on each line):

- 1 How often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?
- 2 How often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?
- 3 How often have you felt "stressed" and nervous?
- 4 How often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your life's problems?
- 5 How often have you felt that things were going your way?
- 6 How often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you have to do?
- 7 In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?
- 8 In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?
- 9 How often have you been angered because of things that were outside your control?
- 10 How often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not cope?

[While the scale above does not have specific score cut offs, your total score does give you an indication of the amount of stress in your life. Total scores will range from zero to 40 points, with the higher scores indicating greater stress. For questions (numbers 4, 5, 7 and 8), you will need to reverse the number on your score as these are indications of positive ways of handling stress. For example, if you indicate "four" on question number four, you'll actually give yourself zero points. Use this tool to track your progress.]

SOAP Note

- ✓ Insurance-friendly
- ✓ Can be scanned into EMR
- ✓ Patient completes all non-gray box sections

Review of Systems (check "Yes" or "No" for each item below):

	Yes	No
shortness of breath		
weight gain		
fatigue		
palpitations		
chest pain		

	Yes	No
headaches		
diarrhea		
constipation		
poor memory		
anxiousness		

Past Medical & Family History (check all that apply):

	I do have	I do not have	I did have	Family History
blood sugar issues				
low vitamin D level				
underactive thyroid				
depression				
anxiety				

Exam:

- Vitals: Weight: _____ BP: _____ Pulse : _____ BMI: _____
- General: awake, alert x 4 and in NAD tired appearing good insight & judgment
- Cardiovascular RRR without MGR abnl _____
- Mood: alert cooperative anxious flat tearful other _____

Assessment/Plan: _____

PATIENT INITIATED PLAN OF CARE

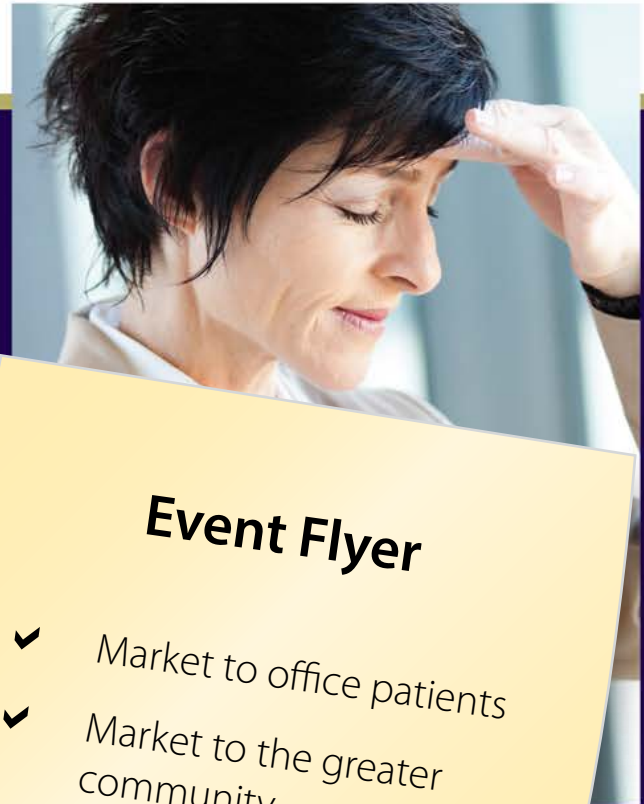
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educated on stress perception and stress management techniques <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educated on importance of sleep hygiene, balanced exercise, low glycemic food choices. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Follow-up: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Handout information given includes deep breathing techniques and lifestyle recommendations. <input type="checkbox"/> Patient requests further evaluation (testing/ individual appointment for reducing stress triggers to help current medical issues). <input type="checkbox"/> Other recommendations:
--	--

Provider signature: _____ **DATE:** _____

Restoring the Balance: Stress Hormones and Health

Contrary to popular belief, stress is not just an emotional response to a challenging situation. Stress and our reaction to it actually involves a very complex hormone system that includes the adrenal glands and has a direct impact on our health and how we feel.

Join us to learn more about how to improve your stress response system, and balance stress hormones to improve energy, sleep and health.



Event Flyer

- ✓ Market to office patients
- ✓ Market to the greater community
- ✓ Customizable Word format

LOGO AREA

**Ready for Better Stress Perception?
Register for a patient group visit.**

Date/Time/Location

GROUP VISIT



Restoring the Balance:
Stress Hormones and Health

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PowerPoint Slides

- ✓ Concepts reviewed in video
- ✓ PPT slide files for clinician to present and modify as needed
- ✓ Handouts for patients

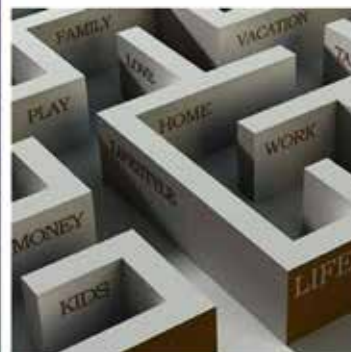
Stress- What Is It Really?

"the non-specific
response of the body to
any demand for change"

~ Hans Selye, MD
1907-1982



"the non-specific response of the
body to any demand for change"



Sources of
Chronic
Stress

Life Happens



Distress

- ✓ Negative feelings
- ✓ Negative physical issues
- ✓ Not getting the job

Eustress

- ✓ Positive change
- ✓ Getting the job!



eustress or no stress?

"the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change"



tolerance

acceptance

compassion

you see the world
through how you feel

the tragic or the
humorous is a
matter of
perspective

~Arnold Belsher



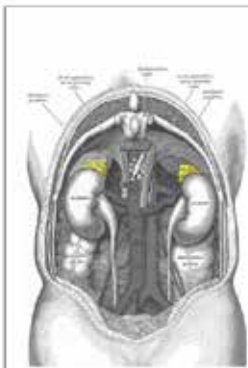
Digging
Deep Into
Root Causes



What's
Happening
Inside Your
Body
When You Are
Stressed?

What's
Happening
Inside Your
Body
When You Are

Reacting to
Stressors?



Meet Your Adrenals

• The '**2 IN 1**'
Endocrine Gland

• Outer shell = Cortex

- cortisol
- DHEA

• Inner core = Medulla

- norepinephrine
- epinephrine

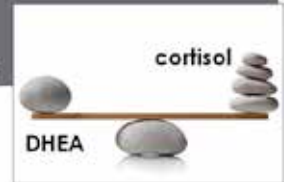
Balance in the Body

Cortisol

- Stress Hormone
 - Increase sugar & fat
 - Rescue mode
- Works with 'adrenaline'
- Anti-inflammatory
- Directs immune system
- Directs other hormones

DHEA

- Anti-stress hormone
- Anti-aging
- Calming



General Adaptation Syndrome

◦ Alarm Stage

- Involves the sympathetic nervous system
- **Fight, Flight, Fright Response**

◦ Resistance Stage

- True adaptation to stress
- Normal balance of hormones sustains everything

Stress Reactions Used to Be Much Less Frequent



The Basics

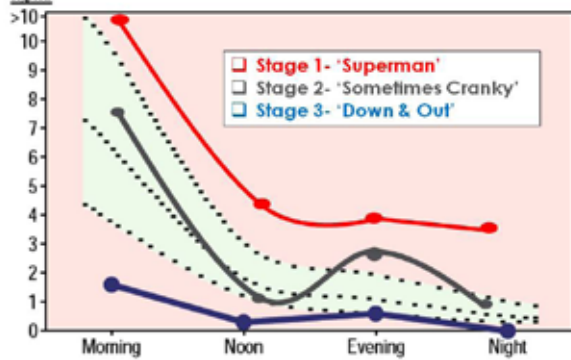
- Food
- Water
- Shelter
- Community
- Purpose

but modern stressors include...

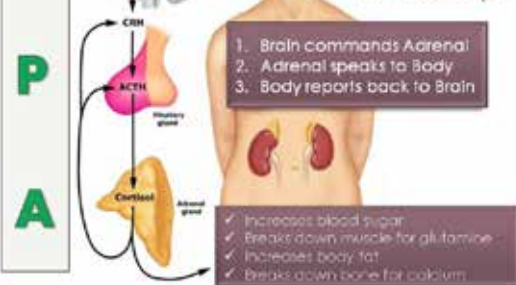
General Adaptation Syndrome

- Alarm Stage
- Resistance Stage
- Exhaustion Stage
 - Inability to make hormones
 - Good thing gone bad
 - "Burn out"

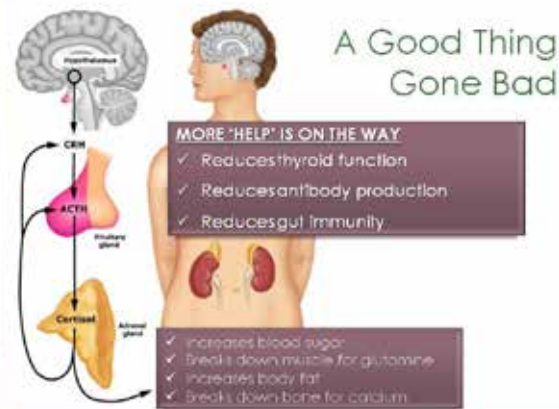
Cortisol Curves Over Time



The Stress Response Pathways



A Good Thing Gone Bad



The Effects of Chronic Stress

The Roots

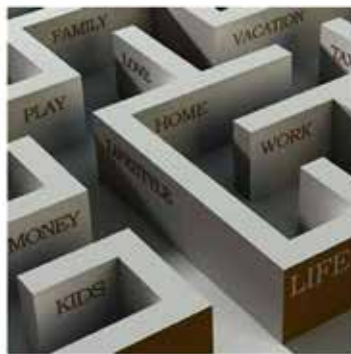
Prolonged storage of fat
 Blood sugar imbalances
 Loss of muscle
 Underactive thyroid function
 Loss of bone
 Poor immunity

The Tree

Overweight & Obese kids and adults
 Metabolic syndrome & Diabetes
 Weight gain, injury, fatigue, less longevity
 Hormone imbalances
 Earlier bone disease
 Get sick easier



Body Health
 Adrenal Health
 Mental Health



Potential Sources of Chronic Stress



4 Key Stressors

- SLEEP
- THINK/FEEL
- IMMUNE
- SUGAR/INSULIN

- ✓ 7-9 hours a night
- ✓ Practice relaxation to reduce worry
- ✓ Write down the 'To-do-list'
- ✓ Address medical causes



sleep

The Right Balance



PHYSICAL EXERCISE

Think
&
Feel



breathe



peace

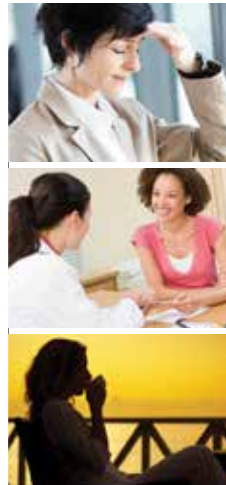
"If you ask what is the single most important key to longevity, I would have to say it is avoiding worry, stress and tension. And if you didn't ask me, I'd still have to say it."

-George F. Burns,
American comedian
& centenarian



GROUP VISIT

Restoring the Balance:
Stress Hormones and Health



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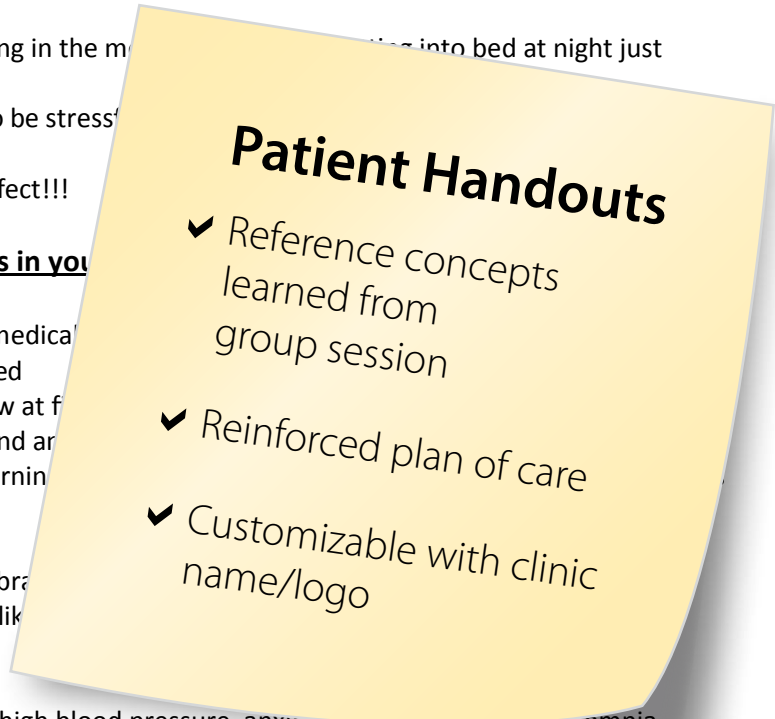
Restoring the Balance: Stress Hormones & Health

Deep Breathing for Adrenal Health:

- Get comfortable in a chair or in bed.
- Close your eyes and focus only on your breath.
- Take slow deep breaths in through your nose and even slower breaths out through your nose.
- Think of breathing in for a count of 3 and out for a count of 6.
- Aim for 6 breaths a minute, only if it is comfortable for you.
- Never hold your breath (as this creates stress in your mind and body). Remember this for all day purposes.
- Think of some time or some place where you felt totally happy, safe and loved. Be there in your mind's eye.
- If your mind drifts to other things, return your focus to your breathing and happy thoughts.
- If desired, you can tighten the muscles in the back of throat while exhaling, as though you are trying to fog up a mirror but with your lips gently closed. This further slows exhalation and also stimulates your heart rate to slow down even more.
- Best times for practicing are first thing on awakening in the morning and just before going into bed at night just before falling asleep.
- Other times are prior to any event that is known to be stressful.
- Remember, you cannot practice too much.
- Practice does make the mind-body connection perfect!!!

Lifestyle Recommendations to decrease stress effects in your body:

- Take control of your sleep by addressing possible medical issues.
- Aim for 7-9 hours, waking up refreshed and restored
- Build physical activity into your routine. Take it slow at first.
- Incorporate stretching and make it fun for your mind and body.
- Eat a protein-rich, whole foods breakfast every morning and a healthy lunch and dinner later in the day.
- Eat 5 cups of fresh fruits and vegetables per day
 - o Gives important nutrients to your brain and body.
 - o Filling up on these makes you less likely to eat junk food.
- Drink plenty of water every day
- Ingredients to avoid
 - o Caffeine can increase your risk for high blood pressure, anxiety, panic attacks and insomnia.
 - o Alcohol can decrease the benefits of your sleep making you less ready for the next day's stress.
 - o Soft drinks/concentrated sweets can swing your blood sugars making your mind and body more stressed and seeking the next sugar high.



Perspective Recommendations to decrease physical and emotional stress in your body:

- Perfection is not the goal.
- Do not punish or reward yourself either way.
- Just focus on increasing your tolerance, acceptance and compassion to decrease your "reactivity" to potential stressors in your daily life.



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How am I Handling Stress?

Modern life is stressful. We are all affected by stress, yet it is how we perceive and respond to the stressors in our lives that can have a major impact on our health. The consequences of stress are different for each individual. Think about the answers to these questions:

Are you easily overwhelmed by everyday tasks that were once a breeze?

Do you get angry over things that never used to bother you?

Have you gained weight around your mid-section?

Are you experiencing difficulty falling or staying asleep?

Are you having difficulty concentrating?

Do you crave foods that you know are unhealthy for you?

Do you suffer from chronic infections or frequent illness?

Is your libido not what it once was?

Are you easily irritated by family members and co-workers?

Do you feel like you have no energy by the middle of the afternoon?

Are you relying on coffee or chocolate to make it through the day?

Are you relying on alcohol to relieve stress?

Do aches and pains linger longer than they once did?

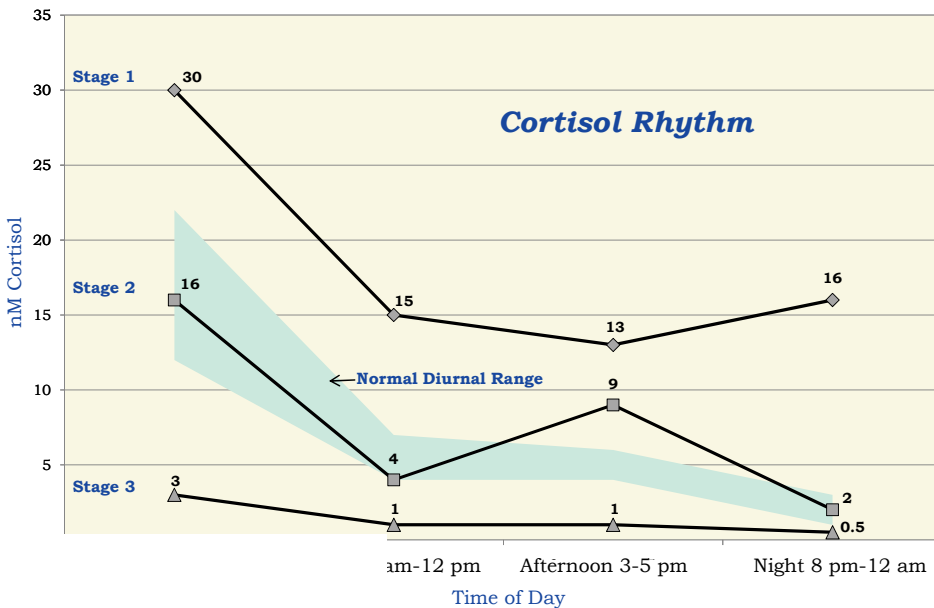
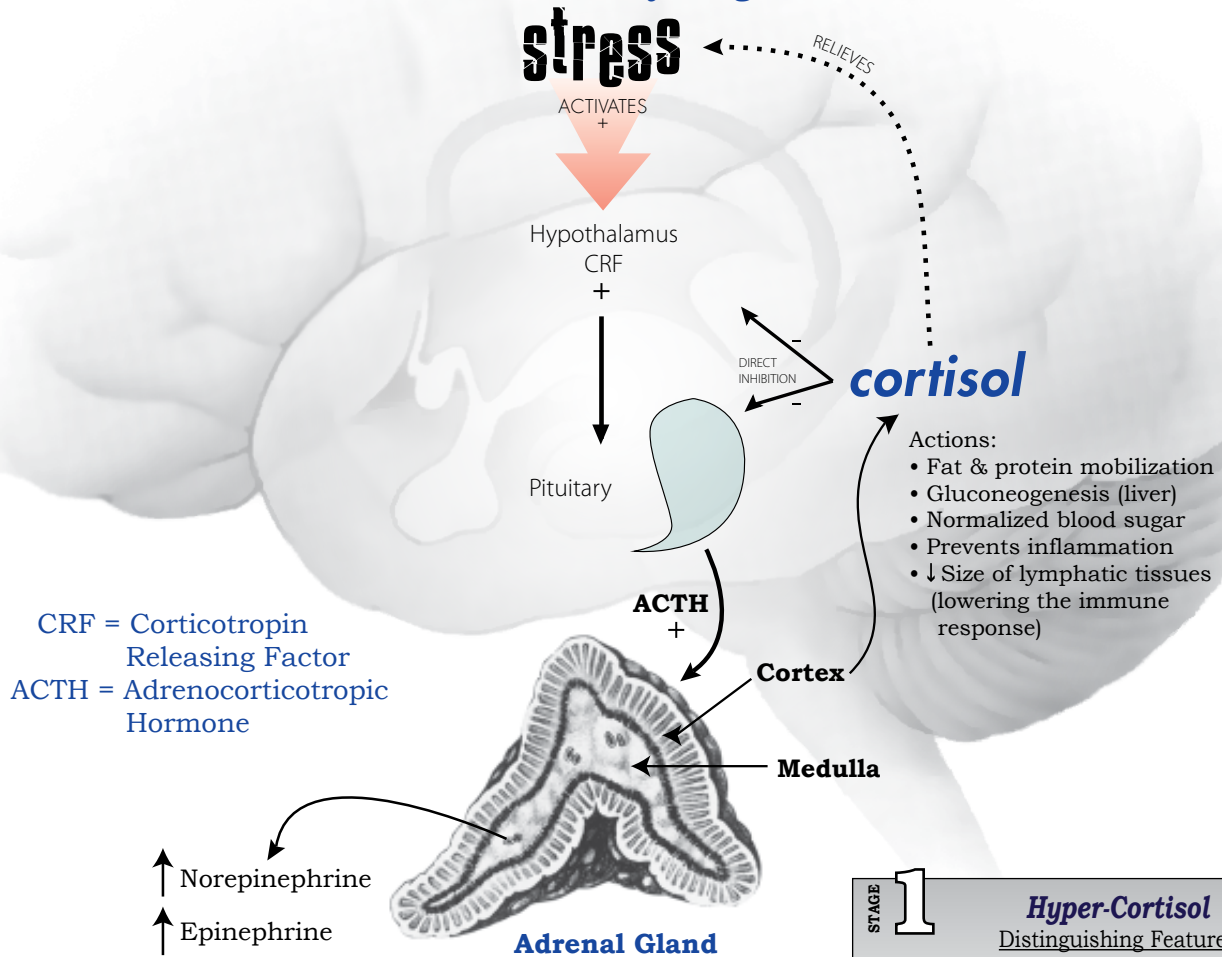
If you identify with several of these statements, your body's system for adapting to stress is not responding optimally. If you identify with more than three or four of these statements, your body is sending signals that life's stresses are overwhelming its ability to keep up.

HPA Axis Dysfunction

Actions, Repercussions & Recovery



Stress Recovery Program



STAGE 1

Hyper-Cortisol

Distinguishing Features

- High stress reaction
- Elevated cortisol
- Anxiety
- Immune suppression
- Insomnia
- Restlessness

Alarm: Stressed and Wired

STAGE 2

Cortisol Dominant

Distinguishing Features

- Irregular cortisol rhythm
- Additional hormonal irregularities
- Mood, sleep cycle issues
- Difficulty concentrating
- Frequent energy crashes
- Blood sugar imbalances

Resistance: Stressed and Tired

STAGE 3

Hypo-Cortisol

Distinguishing Features

- Low cortisol
- Fatigue, depression
- Pain, severe inflammation
- Hormonal imbalances
- Immune depletion

Exhaustion: Down and Out

Stress Factors

Mental/Emotional

- Anxiety
- Depression
- PTSD
- Fear, worry
- Restless mind

Sleep Cycle Disturbances

- Not sleeping enough hours
- Unable to fall into a deep sleep
- Difficulty falling asleep
- Inconsistent sleep schedule
- Shift work issues



Blood Sugar Imbalances

- Elevated blood sugar
- Hypoglycemia
- Increased oxidative stress (decreased antioxidant reserve)
- Abdominal obesity
- Metabolic syndrome
- Hyperlipidemia
- Hypertension

Inflammation

- Musculoskeletal: back, joint pain
- GI: dysbiosis, Crohn's disease, diverticulitis
- Dermatological: eczema, psoriasis
- Auto-immune: MS, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis
- Immunological: food allergies, chronic infections

Taking Back Glycemic Control is the Foundation of HPA Axis Recovery

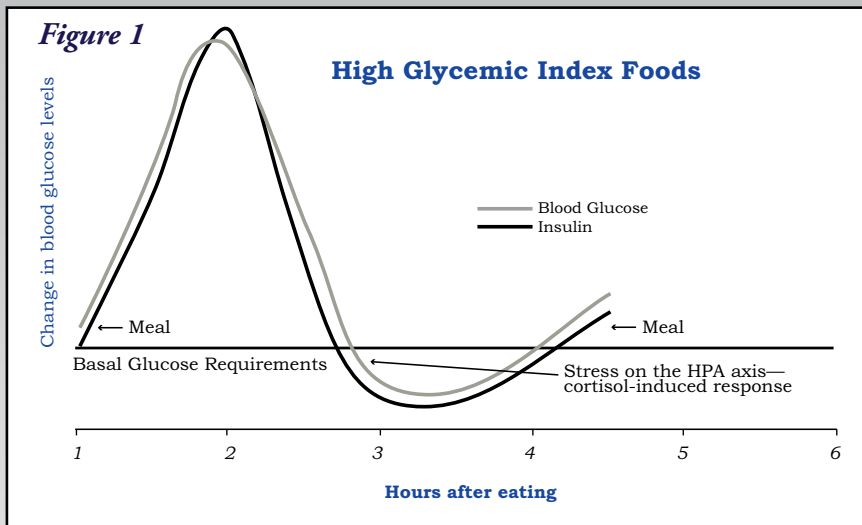
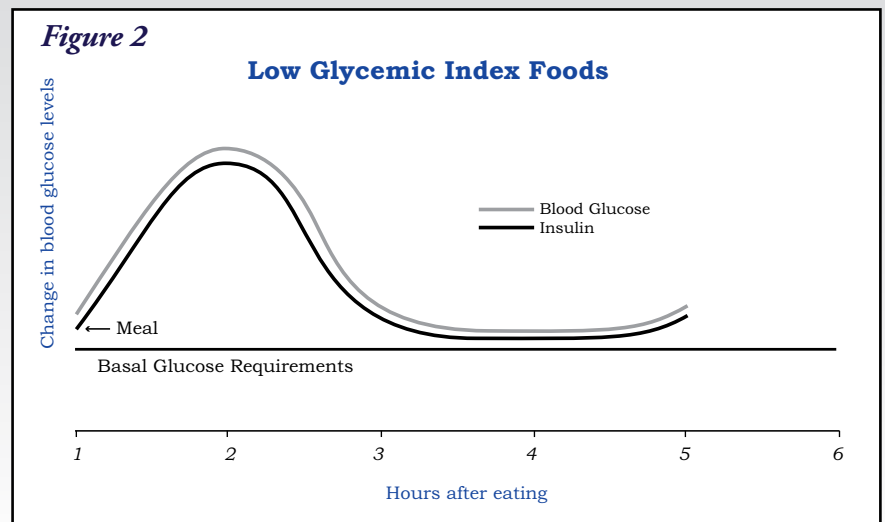


Figure 1 shows the effect of high-glycemic meals, skipping meals or going longer than three to four hours between meals, which causes stress on the HPA axis and a cortisol-induced response.

As shown in **Figure 2**, consuming a low-glycemic meal containing balanced protein, carbohydrates, fat and supportive nutrients helps maintain healthy blood glucose for longer periods.





Stress Recovery Program

4 Key Stressors Questionnaire

Please circle yes or no for each of the following questions.

Please fill in the 'other' section for any unlisted issues related to each category.



Blood Sugar Imbalance

- Do you experience symptoms of hypoglycemia such as: dizziness, shakiness or brain fog between or following meals? Y N
- Do you frequently miss or delay meals? Y N
- Do you frequently crave sugar or carbohydrates? Y N
- Do you consume excessive sugar or refined carbohydrates? Y N
- Are you diabetic or pre-diabetic? Y N
- Do you regularly consume alcohol or caffeine? Y N
- If yes, how much caffeine and/or alcohol do you drink per day? _____
- Other _____

Mental & Emotional Stress

- Do you frequently experience anxiety? Y N
- Do you suffer from depression? Y N
- Do you suffer from mood swings? Y N
- Do you have difficulty getting motivated? Y N
- Do you frequently experience feelings of agitation, anger, fear or worry? Y N

Sleep Cycle Disturbances

- Are you experiencing problems falling asleep? Y N
- Are you experiencing difficulty staying asleep? Y N
- Are you not sleeping enough hours? Y N
- Are you not able to fall into a deep sleep? Y N
- Do you suffer from light cycle disruption or shift work issues? Y N
- Do you frequently feel drowsy throughout the day? Y N
- Other _____

Inflammation

- Musculoskeletal: do you suffer from headaches, muscle, back or joint pain? Y N
- Gastrointestinal: do you suffer from IBS, Crohn's disease or diverticulitis? Y N
- Dermatological: do you suffer from hives, eczema or psoriasis? Y N
- Respiratory: do you suffer from asthma, bronchitis, seasonal allergies or hay-fever? Y N
- Auto-immune: do you suffer from any auto-immune condition such as MS, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis? Y N
- Immunological: do you suffer from food allergies, chronic Infections or frequent Illness? Y N
- Other _____



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The Stress & Diet Connection:

How Sugar Affects the Stress Hormone Cortisol

Food is not just nutrients. It also contains information to help regulate systems in the body. How much, how often and what types of food you eat will determine how your body will respond. Constant fluctuations in blood glucose create one of the body's most stressful conditions. Low blood sugar triggers the adrenal glands to produce cortisol, which stimulates cells to begin producing more glucose.

When you eat foods high in carbohydrates (sweets, unrefined sugars, high glycemic index/load foods), you trigger high amounts of insulin production from your pancreas. The overproduction of insulin helps drive glucose levels down quickly and results in a lower than optimal blood sugar level for a short period of time. This often occurs a short time after lunch, making you feel sleepy. Cortisol, a hormone produced within the HPA axis will help stabilize low blood sugar levels within 30-40 minutes. However, some people may self-medicate with chocolate or coffee, triggering another round of high insulin. When this cycle of glycemic stress is repeated over and over again, it places a constant burden on the HPA axis.

Keeping a food diary for one week may be helpful to objectively assess your food intake and determine the burden you may be placing on your body. **Controlling glycemic response by choosing foods that promote glycemic stability is a critical lifestyle change to relieve chronic stress.** Foods with a low glycemic index that also contain high soluble fiber will help ease insulin spikes that drive blood glucose below normal.

- Breakfast is especially important. Eating a breakfast with proper glycemic balance, which includes good sources of both protein and fat, starts the day off right. *Plan to eat breakfast every morning.*
- Eating more fruits and vegetables will help reduce inflammation, a common burden to the stress response system and will help increase dietary fiber, which helps balance blood sugar.
- Eat protein with each meal (especially breakfast).
- Avoid trans-fats and omega-6 fatty acids.
- Increase omega-3 fatty acids (fish, fish oil, green leafy vegetables, flaxseeds).
- Reduce intake of high glycemic index carbohydrates and sugars. A good online resource can be found at <http://www.faqs.org/nutrition/Foo-Hea/Glycemic-Index.html>
- Schedule “comfort foods” so you won’t splurge because you feel deprived.
- Limit caffeine, alcohol, fried foods and sweets.

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Sleep More: Tips for Improved Sleep Hygiene

Sleep is your body's way of resetting itself metabolically and psychologically. You are designed to function optimally on a 24-hour circadian rhythm. Sleep is what helps your body readjust to the stresses placed upon it during the day. If you are not getting the appropriate amount of sleep or keep adjusting your sleeping pattern (day shift to night shift, etc.) your natural stress response will not be able to function properly. Try to get seven to eight hours of sleep each night, sleeping as much as possible before midnight.

If you have trouble relaxing or falling asleep:

- ☼ Begin by removing stimuli (TV, smart phone, computer, tablet/ipad etc.) for at least 1 hour before bed.
- ☼ Practice relaxation (dim lighting, music, warm tea, hot bath) during the 30–45 minutes before bed.
- ☼ Read a relaxing novel, devotional, or book of inspirational stories. Consider a daily practice of writing in a gratitude journal.
- ☼ You may find it helpful to write down the next day's tasks so you can relax your mind knowing all your "worries" will not be forgotten in the morning.
- ☼ Try to go to bed about the same time each night. On weekends try not to break this routine, even when it may be tempting to stay up late.
- ☼ Cut the caffeine. This will help you get the deep sleep that is most refreshing. If you take any caffeine, take it before noon. Avoid all stimulants in the evening, including coffee, chocolate, caffeinated sodas/teas as they will delay sleep and increase your chance of waking during the night.
- ☼ Sleep in total darkness. Use room darkening shades, utilize alarm clocks with red number display as it does not disrupt natural melatonin secretion. When traveling, place a rolled up towel in front of the hotel room door to block out hall light and bring black tape to cover up the light on smoke detectors or other sources of bright light.
- ☼ Disconnect from your cell phone in the bedroom—take a breather and turn it off. Email and voicemail were invented so you could be away from the phone, not tethered to it! If you have to use it as your alarm, turn it to airplane mode before bed so that texts/calls/emails will not disturb you during your rest.

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