

Adrenal Issues



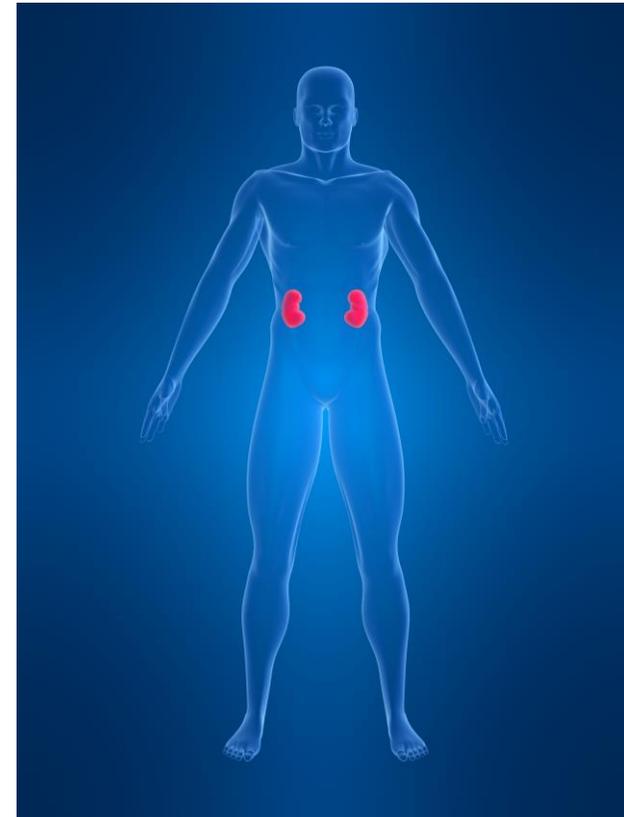
Adrenals

We have talked a lot about adrenals, how they function and the role they and stress play in hormonal issues

But what about the adrenals themselves

What if the issue is not stress but a malfunction of the adrenal glands

Here are a few key conditions



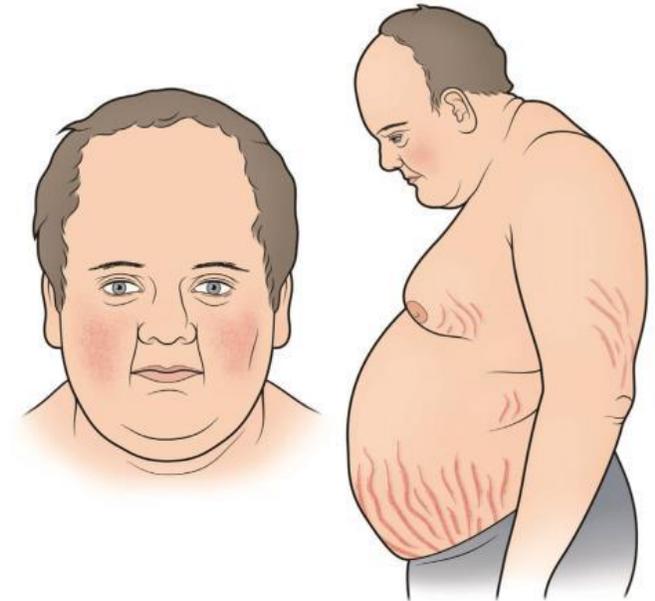
Cushing's Disease

Also known as Cushing's Syndrome

A condition related to the long-term oversecretion of cortisol

Has many causes including pituitary tumor causing the overproduction of ACTH, corticosteroid medications like prednisone, an adrenal tumor issue

Ectopic ACTH syndrome is a form of Cushing's where a tumor outside of the pituitary causes too much ACTH – this includes tumors in the lungs, pancreas, thyroid and thymus



Symptoms

- Weight gain and obesity
- Fatty deposits in the midsection, the face (round, moon-shaped) and between the shoulders and the upper back (lipoma)
- Purple stretch marks on the breasts, arms, abdomen and thighs
- High blood pressure
- Headaches, cognitive issues
- Depression and anxiety
- Acne
- Thin skin or skin injuries that are slow to heal, increased infections
- Fatigue
- Muscle weakness and bone loss
- Glucose intolerance
- Increased thirst and increased urination
- Irritability



Testing

An MD will review the person's history and symptoms

24-hour urine test to measure free cortisol levels

A midnight blood test and late-night salivary cortisol test

A low-dose dexamethasone suppression test – dexamethasone is a medication that lowers cortisol – person takes it at night to see if it lowers cortisol – if they have Cushing's, it will stay high

Birth control pills, morphine, aspirin, methadone, lithium, monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs) and diuretics can all affect the results of this test



Treatment

After diagnosis a high dose dexamethasone suppression may be ordered to help determine cause and a corticotropin-releasing hormone (CHR) stimulation test

Person is given CHR to see if ACTH rises and falls normally – if not, then cause could be pituitary tumor

Treatment – medications to lower cortisol – include ketoconazole (Nizoral), mitotane (Lysodren) and metyrapone (Metopirone) – pasireotide (Signifor) is a med for high ACTH caused by a tumor

Side effects: Liver issues, neurological issues, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, headaches, muscle aches, high blood pressure, low potassium and swelling

Surgery to remove a tumor may be needed or radiation if surgery not an option



Alternative Treatment

- A whole food, hormone balancing diet
- Increase anti-inflammatory foods in the diet
- Good fats help the nervous system
- Foods high in B vitamins, vitamins D and K, calcium, magnesium, and potassium to nurture the adrenals
- Be aware of the effect on digestion since cortisol stimulates the sympathetic nervous system and shuts down digestive juices
- If tumor present – it needs to be checked but is often benign



Alternative Treatment

- Reduce stress – even though it is not the cause – it does not help
- Moderate exercise also helps with stress and weight issues caused by Cushing's
- Getting enough sleep is also essential as it helps balance hormones, and a lack of sleep can increase cortisol levels
- Acupuncture can be helpful for sleep and other symptoms as can meditation and deep breathing
- Adrenal adaptogens are very important
- Essential oils – lavender, myrrh, frankincense and bergamot can lower cortisol, inflammation, balance hormones



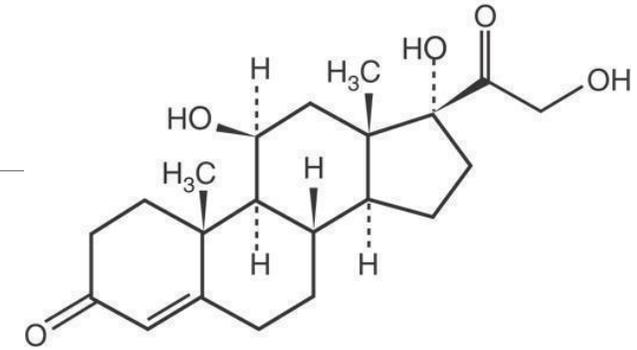
Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia

A group of genetic conditions that prevent the adrenals from making hormones, especially cortisol, but it also includes aldosterone and androgens

It affects the growth and development of children – it can be life threatening but can be controlled with treatment

Children will take hydrocortisone. Adults take hydrocortisone, prednisone, or dexamethasone all to increase cortisol. Fludrocortisone is for low aldosterone

Side Effects: Cataracts, glaucoma, infections, thinning of the skin, weight gain and redistribution of fat, insulin resistance and diabetes, hypertension, headache, psychiatric problems, sodium retention and peripheral edema



Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia

Surgical options also are available

Adrenalectomy is a removal of one or both adrenal glands and is generally not recommended

Stem cell research is ongoing now to stimulate the production of hormones in the adrenals

Other surgeries can be performed based on the specific issues of the person



Adrenal Insufficiency

Condition of low adrenal function

Could be due to Addison's Disease
– autoimmune condition

Could be due to genetic causes

Could be caused by nutritional deficiencies

Prolonged stress and lack of sleep are major
causes

Other systems causing stress on the adrenals
which over time cause insufficiency



Symptoms

- Low blood sugar (hypoglycemia)
- Sleeping issues – always feeling tired
- Sweating and night sweats
- Menstrual issues or irregular periods in women
- Low libido
- Chronic fatigue (lasting more than a couple weeks)
- Muscle weakness
- Digestive issues – abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
- Low blood pressure, dizziness or fainting
- Mood changes, irritability and depression
- Headaches
- Cravings for salty foods
- Changes in appetite – loss of appetite
- Weight loss



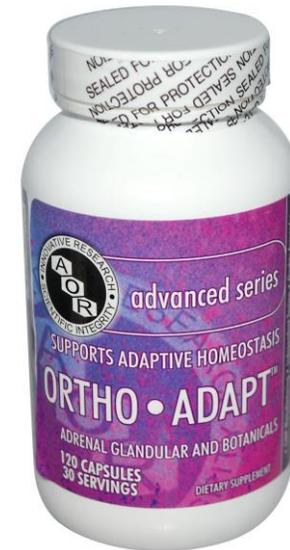
Alternative Treatment

- May help reduce symptoms of congenital adrenal hyperplasia
 - what works for high cortisol works for low cortisol
- Sleep is important – Watch for caffeine, nicotine and alcohol intake which can disrupt sleep
- Reduce stress – Moderate exercise can help, plus relaxation techniques, spend time in sunlight – look at current exercise routines – may not be working for them
- Eat good quality fats, cruciferous vegetables, probiotic foods, liver foods, thyroid foods, fiber
- B vitamins, vitamins C and D, magnesium, zinc
- Adaptogens – licorice, holy basil and ashwagandha may be really helpful



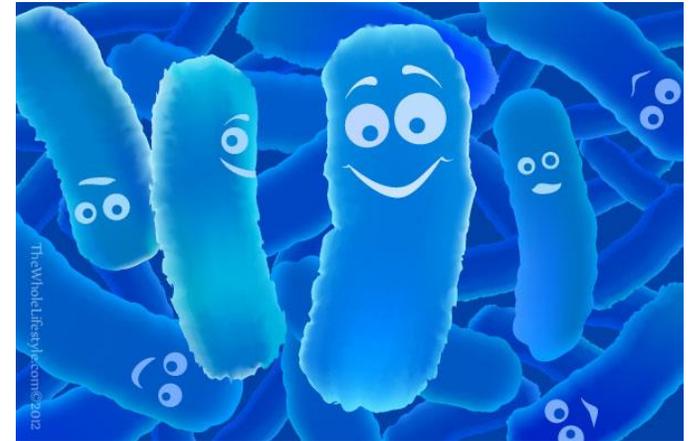
Adrenal Glandulars

- Usually made from bovine source (often New Zealand) that contain raw adrenal tissue or extracts from the tissue, dehydrated in capsule form
- They are adaptogenic in nature but most often are taken for low adrenal function
- Most report a feeling of energy when they start taking
- They do their thing and then should be discontinued
- Body can build a tolerance, requiring more to get the same benefit
- This can cause an adrenal crisis leaving person feeling “wired and tired”



Probiotics And Adrenals

- A recent study had healthy participants take a probiotic daily or a placebo
- There were significant improvements in depression, anger, anxiety, as well as lower levels of cortisol among those taking the probiotic
- Memory and learning are also affected by poor good gut bacteria levels and probiotics have been shown to help
- Probiotics are also being investigated as possible treatment for depression as animal studies have shown a potential benefit – in particular increasing tryptophan levels by bifidobacteria



Prebiotics and Adrenals

A study of healthy volunteers took a GOS prebiotic or a placebo each morning for three weeks – they were given a series of emotional processing tasks

On one task, those taking the prebiotic did not pay much attention to negative words and were much more responsive to positive words

Volunteers taking the prebiotic also had lower levels of cortisol in their saliva

FOS did not show the same results and supports previous studies that GOS is better at stimulating the growth of good bacteria

Stress depletes good bacteria and increases bad bacteria



In Conclusion...

Adrenals are a big issue for many people and can cause havoc with other hormones and systems

Generally working on adrenals take time: 1–2 years for adrenal fatigue. High cortisol can resolve much sooner – depends on the protocol and the client

Improvement will be steady over this time

Patience is required but it is worth it

