

What is adrenal fatigue?

Adrenal fatigue is any decrease (but not failure) in the ability of the adrenal glands to carry out their normal functions. The chief symptom of adrenal fatigue is, indeed, fatigue, but is accompanied by many other signs and symptoms. Adrenal fatigue occurs when stress from any source (physical, emotional, mental, or environmental) exceeds, either cumulatively or in intensity, the body's capacity to adjust appropriately to the demands placed upon it by the stress. When this happens, the adrenals become fatigued and are unable to continue responding adequately to further stress.

Who suffers adrenal fatigue?

Anyone, from birth to old age and from any race or culture, can suffer adrenal fatigue. People vary greatly in their ability to respond to withstand stress. However, those suffering from serious or repeated illness, infectious disease, allergies, inadequate nutrition, intense emotional or physical pressures, or who are exposed to a toxic environment are most likely to suffer from adrenal fatigue. Unfortunately many of these factors are common in modern life.

What causes adrenal fatigue?

There are multitudes of individual causes of adrenal fatigue but they usually stem from one of four common sources that overwhelm the body. Disease states such as severe or recurrent pneumonia, bronchitis or flu, cancer, AIDS, auto-immune and other illnesses physical stress such as surgery, poor nutrition, addiction, injury, exhaustion, etc. emotional stress, usually arising from relationship, work or psychological origins continual and/or severe environmental stress from toxic chemicals and pollutants in the air, water, clothing or food.

Where are the adrenal glands?

The adrenal glands are two small glands, each about the size of a large grape, which sits over the kidneys. They are located in the back, near the bottom of the ribs on each side of the spine.

Is adrenal fatigue common?

Yes, adrenal fatigue is a common disorder, estimated to affect many millions of people in industrialized nations.

Once I have adrenal fatigue, can I ever recover?

Yes, with proper treatment, most people can fully recover from adrenal fatigue.

Can children suffer from adrenal fatigue?

Yes, especially children born to parents suffering from adrenal fatigue themselves. These children are often more sickly, have less ability to handle stressful situations, and take longer to recover from illnesses.

Is adrenal fatigue common in someone with cancer who is going through chemotherapy?

Yes, the extreme fatigue of this and any other chronic illness is often the result of decreased adrenal function. Chronic illness and toxic treatments like chemotherapy are both large stressors for the body and the adrenals are intimately involved in trying to balance these stresses.

Does adrenal fatigue affect the thyroid gland?

Approximately 80% of the people suffering from adrenal fatigue suffer some form of decreased thyroid function. Often people who are known to be low thyroid and are unresponsive to thyroid therapy are suffering from adrenal fatigue as well. For these people to get well, the adrenals must be supported in addition to the thyroid.

Am I more prone to infections if I have adrenal fatigue?

Yes. Adrenal fatigue often goes hand in hand with decreased immune function, which makes someone more prone to illnesses. There is a special association between adrenal fatigue and respiratory infections, such as bronchitis and pneumonia.

My ankles swell after a long hard day on my feet. Is this due to adrenal fatigue?

There are many causes of ankle swelling, but one of the causes is adrenal fatigue. Your ankle swelling is more likely related to it if you have many other signs of adrenal fatigue.

Does anyone ever go through life without adrenal fatigue or adrenal fatigue problems?

Yes. Many people go through life with only a temporary decrease in adrenal function after an infection, the death of a loved one, loss of a job or other severe stress, but their adrenals are able to bounce back and they recover. Someone with adrenal fatigue is overwhelmed and is very slow to recover from these same kinds of problems.



I'm highly allergic now but didn't used to be, is this change due to adrenal fatigue?

It has been long observed that people suffering from adrenal fatigue have a definite increase in allergic responses or become allergic to things that previously did not bother them. This is because cortisol, the major adrenal hormone, is the most powerful anti-inflammatory substance in the body. When the adrenals fatigue, cortisol levels drop and make it more likely that the body will have allergic (inflammatory) reactions and that these reactions will be more severe.

What is the difference between adrenal fatigue and hypoadrenia?

Hypoadrenia, as it is used in a medical sense, refers to adrenal failure or the extremely low adrenal function which is called Addison's disease. Although hypoadrenia, in actuality, occurs in a spectrum ranging from almost normal to Addison's, only the most extreme low end is recognized and called hypoadrenia in medicine. The less severe forms of hypoadrenia are referred to as adrenal fatigue.

Are there laboratory tests that detect adrenal fatigue?

Yes. The most accurate and valuable test for detecting adrenal fatigue is a saliva adrenal hormone test. This is a simple and relatively inexpensive test and has been unavailable until recently. There are other lab tests but they need special interpretation by physicians trained to recognize and treat adrenal fatigue.

Is age a factor?

Any age can suffer from adrenal fatigue but both the very young and very old are more vulnerable to stress and therefore to adrenal fatigue.

How often can I have a bout of adrenal fatigue?

It varies with the person. Some people have only one episode of adrenal fatigue during their lifetime, some have several, and others experience chronic adrenal fatigue from which they never fully recover.

Can adrenal fatigue become chronic?

Yes, in some people the adrenal glands do not return to normal levels of function without help, either because the stress was too great or too prolonged, or because their general health is poor. However, when adrenal fatigue becomes chronic it is almost always because of factors that can be changed.

How can I keep my adrenal glands healthy?

The guidelines for keeping your adrenal glands healthy are very similar to the overall principles of good health. A moderate lifestyle with high quality food, regular exercise and adequate rest, along with a healthy mental attitude to the stresses of life go a long way towards keeping your adrenal glands strong and resilient. However, because modern life is so stressful, certain nutritional supplements are also important to both maintaining healthy adrenal glands and helping depleted adrenal glands recover. Dr. Gaul can supply supplements designed specifically for the adrenals that combines all the necessary nutrients.

Can adrenal fatigue affect my sex life?

Yes. A common complaint from people suffering from adrenal fatigue is decreased sex drive. This is because some of the sex hormones are manufactured in the adrenal glands, as well as in the sex organs themselves. Low adrenal function can lead to low performance or low desire. Both usually return to normal as the adrenals recover.

How do doctors diagnose adrenal fatigue?

Most medical doctors are not aware of adrenal fatigue or the syndrome. They only recognize Addison's disease, which is the most extreme end of low adrenal function. Astute doctors who are familiar with the varying degrees of decreased adrenal function usually test the adrenal hormone levels in the saliva. This is an accurate and useful indicator of adrenal fatigue. There are other common lab tests that can be used more indirectly to detect adrenal fatigue, but the majority of medical doctors are unaware of how to interpret these tests for indications of adrenal fatigue. Many doctors who are aware of adrenal fatigue syndrome use some form of questionnaire to help make their diagnosis.



Can I pass the tendency of adrenal fatigue genetically to my children?

It is not known if there is an actual genetic predisposition to adrenal fatigue. However if one or both parents suffer from adrenal fatigue, either chronically or during the time of conception, and if the mother has adrenal fatigue during gestation, there is a greater than 50% chance that their children will also suffer from adrenal fatigue. This may be seen as a child with a weak constitution, early allergies, a propensity towards lung infections, and a decreased ability to handle stress who takes longer to recover after illness. Although these children will never have exceptionally strong adrenal glands, much can be done to help them recover by the use of adrenal extracts and other remedies.

Is adrenal fatigue related to fibromyalgia or clinical depression?

Yes, adrenal fatigue can be related to both. Most people who suffer from fibromyalgia have a form of adrenal fatigue. Sometimes the adrenal fatigue comes before the fibromyalgia. A mild depression is also a chief sign of adrenal fatigue and although there are other conditions that cause clinical depression, if clinical depression is present, a saliva test for adrenal hormones will determine whether the adrenals are involved.

Is adrenal fatigue related to chronic fatigue syndrome?

Yes, adrenal fatigue is a common, but usually unrecognized, component of chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS). The most likely connection between them is that the infectious agent(s) that lead to the development of CFS also set up conditions that foster adrenal fatigue. The direct effects of a smoldering pathogen in the body as well as the systematic stress the infection creates put the adrenals on overload. With new diagnostic procedures available for detecting the specific infectious agent(s) responsible, there have been encouraging results using a combination treatment that eliminates the specific pathogen(s) while strengthening the adrenals.

Is adrenal fatigue involved in people with HIV or Hepatitis C?

Yes, adrenal fatigue is a common factor in people with Hepatitis C and HIV. Unfortunately one of the treatments for Hepatitis C is the administration of corticosteroid drugs. This suppresses both the adrenals and the immune system, and causes a more rapid death. With HIV, a relationship between survival and cortisol levels has been shown.

Will I need prescription drugs to treat adrenal fatigue?

Most cases of adrenal fatigue can be remedied without prescription drugs. Most treatments are natural, inexpensive and effective, and most have been used by many aware physicians to help people recover from adrenal fatigue. The most severe cases may need prescription drugs in the treatment.

My doctor says there is no such illness as adrenal fatigue. What should I do?

Unfortunately, this is the view of many conventional doctors, but they are not as well informed as they believe. Adrenal fatigue was first diagnosed over 100 years ago and has been successfully treated for decades. However, for various reasons that largely have to do with the close association between medicine and the pharmaceutical industry, the medical community has ignored the existence of adrenal fatigue syndrome over the past 40 years. The best thing to do is to switch to a doctor who is familiar with adrenal fatigue syndrome. If you want to keep the same doctor, give him/her a copy of this information, but do not get your hopes up about him/her having a change of position.

My doctor has never heard of adrenal fatigue. How do I convince him/her that I might have it?

Unless your doctor is more open than most, you probably will not convince him or her that you have adrenal fatigue. My only suggestion is to give your doctor a copy of this information. The other solution is to wait ten years. By then most doctors will probably have heard of it, and hopefully many more will know how to recognize and treat it.

Does smoking increase my chances of adrenal fatigue?

Yes. Anytime you place a stress such as smoking on your body, it is more difficult for your adrenals to function. Smoking by itself does not lead directly to adrenal fatigue, unless the adrenals are already weak. However, smoking is one of the body burdens that accelerate adrenal fatigue and keep complete recovery from occurring.

Do athletes or very fit people have the same risk as the rest of us of developing adrenal fatigue?

Athletes and very fit people can also suffer from adrenal fatigue under certain circumstances. If they push themselves too hard, skip meals, take drugs (e.g. steroids), and have a lifestyle that is otherwise not conducive to their health, they can lead themselves into adrenal fatigue, the same as anyone else. Relentlessly pushing themselves, as some athletes do, is also a significant risk factor. Also, severe injuries, illnesses and emotional stresses can debilitate the adrenal glands of athletes the same as they can in other people. Just because someone is an athlete does not necessarily mean they are in excellent health. The better overall health someone has, the less they will experience adrenal fatigue.



Does diet have anything to do with adrenal fatigue?

Yes. Diet has a lot to do with adrenal fatigue, both in its cause and in its recovery. The phrase "garbage in, garbage out" aptly describes the relationship between what we eat and adrenal fatigue. If we eat garbage, our bodies eventually become trashed and one of the common results is adrenal fatigue.

I am disabled and cannot exercise; will that make my chances of getting adrenal fatigue even higher?
Not necessarily. There are a variety of factors in addition to exercise that influence your adrenal resiliency. It all depends on how many things you stack in favor for your own health.

Are North Americans more prone to adrenal fatigue than people from other nations?

Despite a relative abundance of resources, North Americans have increased their likelihood of suffering from adrenal fatigue because of their hectic lifestyle, poor food choices, lack of exercise, and drug, alcohol and caffeine consumption. People of less wealthy nations may be subject to other factors that are individually worse than those North Americans experience, but their overall lifestyle and social structure help counterbalance these.

Does adrenal fatigue affect a woman's menstrual cycles?

Yes, adrenal fatigue can affect menstrual cycles. PMS, altered menstrual flow and difficult menopause can definitely be related to adrenal fatigue.

Does pregnancy set off adrenal fatigue?

No, usually pregnancy helps adrenal fatigue because the fetus produces a greater amount of natural adrenal hormones than the amount in the non-pregnant female. However, if the pregnancy is very stressful, it can lead to or increase adrenal fatigue. Post-partum depression and significant fatigue post-partum are often related to adrenal fatigue.

If I already have adrenal fatigue, how likely am I to get worse or to even acquire Addison's disease?
The answer to this question largely depends upon you. The more things in this book you do to recover, the less likely you are to go down that path. Approximately 70% of cases of Addison's disease are actually an auto-immune disease, but the rest (about 30%) are precipitated by things that happen in people's lives. Your lifestyle, food choices, exercise patterns, attitudes and how you teach yourself to respond to stress all have a tremendous impact on whether you recover from adrenal fatigue or continue to progress downhill.

Are there any precautions I need to take before surgery to protect my adrenal glands?

Yes. Increase your intake of magnesium, pantothenic acid and ascorbic acid with bioflavonoids. Eat only high quality foods, especially good quality proteins and lots of dark green vegetables. Use self-hypnosis, visualization and/or relaxation methods to prepare yourself mentally and emotionally to remain calm and positive throughout the procedure to heal more quickly afterwards.

What can I do to prevent adrenal fatigue?

Whenever you get sick, dramatically increase your intake of vitamin C, bioflavonoids, magnesium and pantothenic acid. Better yet, use a customized formula for adrenal fatigue such as those available from Dr. Gaul. Often tonics are valuable, especially the herbal formulas for adrenal fatigue. Adrenal cell extract, by itself or as part of a formula, is also very beneficial. After you have an illness, do not try to hit the floor running. Instead take an extra day off work in order to rejuvenate. If you are still tired after an illness, emotional shock or other event that produces adrenal fatigue, sleep in late, be especially conscious of eating high quality foods, and avoid caffeine and alcohol. In addition, saunas can be great for detoxifying and unwinding, thus lessening the stress load on your adrenals.

Adapted from [Adrenal Fatigue: The 21st Century Syndrome](#), 2000 by James L. Wilson, N.D., D.C., Ph.D.