

As a student, I studied hard and got good grades. But recently I took a “quiz” that I wasn’t exactly thrilled to get a high score on. I’d been noticing that I was feeling more tired (even after sleeping 7-8 hours) and turning to caffeine and sugar a bit more (okay, a *lot* more) to get through the day, and feeling anxious sometimes without knowing why. Even though I was eating “right” and exercising, the words “tired and wired” kept popping into my brain. And, truth be told, as a woman entering that “special” time in life (menopause), and getting closer to the big “5-0” (June 15<sup>th</sup> by the way!), I wanted to make sure I didn’t gain weight (and losing a couple of pounds would be fine too!).

The quiz focused on adrenal imbalance. The adrenals are part of the endocrine system. They are located just above the kidneys, and consist of two parts, the inner medulla and the cortex (outer covering). When your nervous system senses danger (physical or psychological) the adrenal glands release adrenalin and noradrenaline, the “fight or flight”, stress-response hormones, into your bloodstream for that quick spurt of superhuman energy. This energy requires fuel, so fats and glycogen are also released which result in a spike in blood sugar and an increase in free fatty acids circulating in the blood. Cortisol and insulin levels may also rise to help channel more glucose to your muscles and brain, sharpening your response to the situation. In the face of a true emergency (running from a bear in the woods) this response would be helpful.

But in our modern lives, we’re constantly overworked, overwired, undernourished, and exposed to many environmental toxins, all of which create chronic stress. Add to that our emotional challenges (life, kids, parents, relationships, etc.), and our adrenal glands are on overload. Constant, chronic stress can tax the adrenals, forcing them to make lots of cortisol, which can affect metabolism and insulin sensitivity and lead to weight gain (among other issues). In addition, the adrenals may lose their ability to produce sufficient amounts of DHEA, a hormone precursor to estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone. Insufficient DHEA can also contribute to fatigue, depression, decreased immune function, and more.

If you: are always on the go and are the person who gets things done; need a sugar or caffeine jolt in the afternoon; often crave salty foods or sugar; find it difficult to get out of bed; can’t live without coffee or caffeine; get tired about 9 pm but then get a second wind and stay up too late; are irritable and have a short fuse; feel exhausted but can’t relax, etc., etc., then please give our office a call. There is hope! I’m very happy to report that changes in diet, lifestyle, and mind-body work can help. One week into my program, I have more energy, my caffeine cravings are subsiding, it’s easier to get out of bed.... and I’ve lost three pounds! Happy Birthday to Me!

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