



Addressing adrenal *fatigue*

Could your exhaustion be adrenal fatigue? Enhancing your endocrine system may be the key to having more energy.

Ann is a 42-year-old flight attendant, and she is typical of patients I consult - depleted from decades of working long hours, raising kids solo and experiencing devastating relationships. Ann complained of constant colds, fatigue even after long sleeps, hair loss, headaches, frequent urination, low libido, irritability, irregular periods, memory loss, apathy, anxiety, poor circulation and weight loss. Her blood pressure was also very low, she experienced dizziness with palpitations, and she ate erratically, craving caffeine and sugar.

All of Ann's symptoms suggested adrenal fatigue, a term coined in 1998 by James Wilson, a naturopath and chiropractor. Although allopathic medicine does not consider adrenal fatigue to be a disease, many health practitioners do recognise it as subclinical hypoadrenia, which is distinct from other serious conditions affecting adrenal hormones, such as Addison's Disease.

A definitive diagnosis

Given that Ann's symptoms could have many causes, from anaemia and depression to perimenopause and diabetes, a definitive diagnosis was required. I referred Ann to have her oestrogen, cortisol/DHEA



A customised Bush Flower or Bach Flower blend can ease adrenal fatigue.

ratio, iron, ferritin, FSH, methylation and thyroid-stimulating hormones all checked, along with ACTH stimulation and blood work. The doctor she went to also conducted a CT scan to check her adrenals.

These results came back as 'normal', which was not surprising because adrenal fatigue is often undetected. However, a 24-hour, four-sample saliva test (www.i-screen.com.au/tests/adrenal-fatigue-test) revealed Ann's cortisol levels were on the low range of normal when they should have been high in the morning, and in the high range of normal when they should have been low in the evening. By understanding the underlying causes and undertaking the appropriate treatment, Ann improved significantly.

What can go wrong

When the body reacts to stress, the hypothalamus and pituitary glands trigger the adrenal glands to release the hormones cortisol, adrenaline and noradrenaline. In the short term, these hormones create the 'fight or flight' response that enables us to act swiftly and efficiently in response to stress or danger by triggering hundreds of metabolic, physical and mental actions, such as increasing heart rate. However, over-secretion of these hormones in response to sustained stress may result in adrenal fatigue. Dr Michael Lam lists 75 signs of Adrenal Fatigue Syndrome (www.drlamcoaching.com).

Adrenal fatigue can be worsened by psychological and physical factors,

including acidity, antibiotics, food sensitivities, infections, microbiome imbalances and toxicity. Adrenal fatigue progresses through four phases - alert, dismay, resistance and burnout. In the alert phase, increased amounts of adrenal hormones are secreted. In the dismay phase, the body is 'wired but tired', with the hormone precursor DHEA and sex hormones declining. In the resistance phase, low hormones reduce libido and energy, and may disturb the menstrual cycle. In the burnout phase, hormones and neurotransmitters are critically low, affecting the ability to think and act.

Road to recovery

A mix of mindset, lifestyle, diet, therapies and supplements is essential to mend adrenal fatigue. Olympic swimmer Lisa Forrest quit her career due to burnout,

and in her book *Glide: Take the Panic out of Modern Living*, she reveals that her top tools were "mindfulness, compassion, curiosity and joy." Meditation techniques can reset automatic stress responses, so the nervous system relaxes with faith instead of reacting in fear.

Observe a routine promoting harmonious rhythm, with gentle exercise, 7-8 hours of sleep (starting before 9.30pm), fresh air, deep breathing and enjoyable activities. Eat a restorative diet that comprises plentiful pure water, wholegrains, vegetables, seeds and 'good' fats, such as coconut oil, olive oil or ghee. Stabilise blood sugar levels by eating small, warm meals every three hours. Avoid overscheduling, alcohol, caffeine, sugar, hot spices, exposure to cold, high adrenaline activities, skipping meals and excessive screen time, and eliminate energy 'drains', such as tiresome people,

unnecessary duties, self-defeating thoughts and uncomfortable surroundings.

A health professional may suggest adrenal aids, such as cleansing practices, herbs, and nutritional supplements. Adaptogenic herbs which increase resilience and relaxation include ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*), cordyceps (*Ophiocordyceps sinensis*), holy basil (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*), licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*), maca (*Lepidium meyenii*), rhodiola (*Rhodiola rosea*), schisandra (*Schisandra chinensis*), Siberian ginseng (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*), rehmannia (*Rehmannia glutinosa*) and tribulus (*Tribulus terrestris*). Supplements to support recovery from adrenal fatigue include acetyl-L-carnitine, the B-group vitamin complex, lipoic acid, magnesium, vitamin C, vitamin D3, GABA, probiotics, selenium, ubiquinol and zinc.

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