Combat Stress – The Healthy Way

Stress is a result of our bodies responding to a situation whether it be negative (fear or injury) or positive (love and excitement). Regardless the nature of your stress whether physical, mental, social or emotional it is how our body responds to the stressor that is essential. We all need a certain amount of stress in our everyday lives to keep us motivated, driven and excited. This type of stress is healthy and helps keep us focused, however it is when we find ourselves in a situation where we are unable to wind down and rest that causes havoc to our adrenal glands.

Cortisol and adrenaline are the main hormones produced by our adrenals during periods of stress. When we cannot switch off this 'flight or fight' response it becomes dangerous as our body cannot then switch off the production of hormones leaving us feeling tired, anxious, irritable, and weak. Often people experience gastrointestinal disturbances, sugar cravings and blood sugar disorders, headaches, low self-esteem, sleep changes and high blood pressure as well. This can lead to adrenal exhaustion when our body effectively shuts down, telling us it has had enough and needs to stop, rest, recover and reset.

Nutritional Tips

- **Eat quality protein with every meal** – when you feel stressed the body often craves carbohydrates for energy especially sugars, while at the same time the body is breaking down more protein from your muscle tissue to sustain energy.
- **Eat lots of fresh fruits and vegetables** – contain lots of essential nutrients to support a healthy immune system while eradicating free radicals.
- **Eat wholegrains** – these foods stabilise blood sugar levels and contain many essential nutrients including B vitamins that can help with mood and may reduce sugar cravings.
- **Eat regular planned meals** – skipping meals deprives the body of essential nutrients required to cope with stressors.
- **Eat in a relaxed environment and chew thoroughly** – when stressed digestion is often affected as the body cannot produce enough enzymes to breakdown food properly, therefore nutrients fail to be absorbed effectively.
- **Incorporate onion and garlic –** these both display anti-microbial properties and boost the immune system.
- **Herbal teas** – can provide relaxant properties and support your adrenal glands.
- **Avoid alcohol, caffeine and tobacco** – these are toxic for your adrenal glands and affect glucose regulation. If you really need caffeine stick to 1 per day maximum as caffeine enhances our bodies reaction to stress.

Lifestyle Tips

- **Find a hobby** or something you enjoy doing (yoga, walking, beach, reading, TV show, video game etc.) that allows you to relax and not think too much. Spend 30 mins doing an activity that you enjoy each day to unwind.
- **Lay on your back** with your legs up against the wall for 10 minutes, to allow blood flow to go to your head and just breathe focusing on your breathing only.
- **Become a planner**. Start each day off with a list of what needs doing in order of priority making it realistic.

- **Aim for 8 hours of sleep** each night. If you do not get 8 hours of sleep don't think too much about it, just focus on aiming to get 8 hours sleep the following night.
- **Try to avoid TV, phone and computer lights** an hour before sleep or at least 30 minutes prior to give your body the best chance of being able to fall asleep.
- **Exercise regularly** aiming for 30 minutes each time – 4 times a week can boost mood.
- **Enjoy quality time** with friends and family.
- **Take a magnesium and B vitamin supplement** to help support your adrenals and calm your nervous system during periods of stress.
- **Practicing deep breathing exercises** or try meditation can also help you relax and handle stressful situations more effectively.

Customised nutritional plans comprising of a specific food plan with the support of nutrient/herbal supplements can be very effective in the management of stress and supporting your adrenals. If you require support please visit www.good4younutrition.com.au