

Natural Healing Express Weekly

Column Volume 32 Stress and Belly Fat – The Connection

This will begin a three part series during which we speak specifically about how stress affects the body and puts on that dreaded belly fat. We'll start with the chemistry of stress, including hormones and adrenals; then discuss cortisol and metabolism and sum everything up with what you can actually do about the belly fat and stress.

In today's world, cortisol, which is an adrenal hormone is almost synonymous with stress, and is often times defined as the stress hormone. Let's start with the basics, how does one know if they have a cortisol problem? Well, if you have stress, and yes, everyone does, coupled with not enough sleep; meaning at least 8 hours of RESTFUL sleep every night and you are dieting or at least trying to – Guess what? You are probably in the ECC (Elevated Cortisol Club). Albeit, perhaps subtly so. That's the problem with being in ECC, many folks simply laugh it off as aging, because it looks a lot like simply getting older, except it's not aging at all; and what it is can be much more dangerous. Reason being, ECC can be the pre-cursor to several potentially fatal disharmonies such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and obesity related illnesses.

To give you a clearer picture, let's talk in layman's terms how stress operates in your system. When a stress occurs, and remember, there is good stress and bad stress, your body reacts by going into what is known as "fight or flight" response. What this means is you either stand and fight the stress, which takes energy or you fly from it which also takes energy. Either way, two hormones are released by your adrenal glands to give you an added extra "boost" in dealing with the stress. Those hormones are adrenaline and cortisol. We all have heard about adrenaline – the guy that picked the car up off the baby at the accident scene or a bar fight that goes wrong, etc., but what we don't hear a lot until recently is the cortisol.

So most of us don't have to fight our food or dangle from skyscrapers for a living, but often, we spend much too much time REACTING with the fight or flight response to our daily stressors – and overtime this takes a huge toll on your adrenals. So much so that in several cases, adrenals simply burn out. There are many books out now concerning Adrenal Fatigue, meaning one is heading into the burn out process. What's causing fatigue and burn out is too much cortisol, which could aptly be described as hyper vigilance if you will.

In a "normal" stress reaction, it works a bit like this. 1) Stress Occurs 2) Stress Response begins in Brain, 3) Fight or Flight Response (adrenals release hormones) 4) Stress/Stress Response Ends and Hormone Release Dissipates. 5) Body Resumes normal function

In Chronic Stress or Hyper Vigilance it works a little more like this 1) Stress Occurs 2) Stress Response begins in Brain 3) Fight or Flight Response Deviation or Repetitive Fight or Flight (adrenals release and release and release) 4) Stress Response Repeats, Hormones Continue, Tissue Damage 5) Serious Disharmony/Death.

What can we do to prevent this? Ways of adapting to stress are as varied as its causes. At Natural Healing Express, we carry several great products to be of assistance. Nurti-Calm capsules help to nutritiously feed the body while calming the stress, providing energy at the same time. We have stress release capsules designed to be of assistance in calming the body. Also, we carry a stress release tincture which works a bit quicker in the body. Obviously, these products are all designed to help the body during the stress actual stress and immediately after, which is a whole heck of a lot better than doing nothing. So, come on in and buy a truckload. Actually, call first, so we can order in a truckload.

But let's be real here. We live in a much stressed out society. Almost everything we do seems to cause us stress. It is next to impossible to live in fantasy land where there isn't one thing to worry about, so the next best option to doing nothing is to learn to how to COPE with the stress (hence the truckload) by finding ways that work for you. Not fake ways, like self-medicating with drugs or alcohol, but efficient ways that actually do something such as learning your Bio-Individuality and working with it.

We can fill up several articles talking about great ways to cope with stress and we've all heard them – yoga, biking, running, music, therapy, essential oil, chicks weekends during the fire fighters convention (oops), deep breathing techniques, etc., etc., etc. Yes, all those are great and whatever works to calm is a WIN.

But let's cut to the chase. The best way to eliminate stress is to reduce your exposure to whatever is CAUSING the stress. That means cut out or take in small doses the ENERGY VAMPIRES in your life (you know, that friend that calls about random things like nail color or the relative that can't make it on their own needing to borrowing money, etc.) You know, right? Identifying the source usually isn't the issue.

You've got to make attempts to get out from underneath the biggest stresses of your life or change them. Do you really dislike your job or just some of the folks there? Can you move to a different department? Is it a constant money struggle trying to make ends meet? Can you downsize?

For most folks, making drastic changes up front probably just isn't an option. But you can make small changes that lead up to a lot less stress. And you can make big changes if you eat the elephant one bite at a time. Start slow, be good to yourself and make it happen. Your adrenals will thank you.

And think this out; if you are around a person, place or thing that is causing you so much stress that it is beginning to affect your health NOW, what real good reason over the LONG haul is there for doing so? You might not make it that far.

Some wise old person said, if you don't have your health, you don't have anything. If stress is beginning to affect you, begin to make changes, until then, reserve your truckload of stress relief products.

Next week Cortisol and Metabolism . Have a nice stress-free weekend.

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