

Cortisol

Cortisol is a catabolic hormone that releases energy and materials for rebuilding, and it is necessary to prevent undue fatigue at various times of the day or evening. Cortisol either in the body or as derived from low dosages of tablets of hydrocortisone, tends to give you a lot of energy, because it helps put sugar from the blood into the brain and muscles as necessary, preventing hypoglycemia or low blood sugar. Low dosages that mimic the bodies needs preserves nitrogen and protein because cortisol regulates the release of amino acids and free fatty acids as well as glucose. We suggest you monitor cortisol levels to find out if you are normal, deficient, or excessive in production.

According to Dr. Ed Lichten, a frequent guest speaker at conferences on hormone therapy, cortisol can be accurately measured in saliva. When testing, several samples can be taken at 6 am to 7 am, at noon, 2 pm to 3 pm and again from 10 pm to midnight to get the circadian rhythm. The changes from hour to hour are important when it comes to cortisol because levels vary so much that you could be normal at one part of the day and then feel extremely fatigued just a few hours later on that same day, which may correspond to the inability to produce enough cortisol at that time.

As with all hormones, ideal balance is the key and cortisol needs to be in balance with anabolic hormones such as testosterone and DHEA. Cortisol levels that are too high show that you are under excess stress and can cause catabolism or break down of tissue and premature aging. Excessively low cortisol levels alert you that you may age faster than normal or be at risk for adrenal failure.

Cortisol helps give you the energy to deal with the pressure of daily life, but if you experience more stress than your body can handle, you may need and use up more cortisol. People who are cortisol deficient feel tired and fatigued all the time, so on those stressful days your doctor may instruct you to take more cortisol. Without enough cortisol, your body will have to compensate by releasing too much adrenaline, and this is why cortisol is called the "fight or flight hormone." Excess adrenaline is very hard on the body and eventually can weaken the whole adrenal feedback system.

Doctors have mistakenly felt that cortisol is a bad hormone that causes you to age prematurely. This poor reputation for cortisol treatments comes from using synthetic cortisone at excessive dosages, yet the proper use of cortisone as described in the book *The Safe Uses of Cortisol*, by William Jeffries can help you to feel energetic all day long and prevent sugar and food cravings.

Excess Cortisol

As stated above, an excessively high cortisol level shows that you are under excess stress and can cause catabolism or break down of tissue and premature aging. If you have too much cortisol in your system, you probably need more sleep, need to reduce stress and feel the urge to eat meals too often. In this case, get to sleep by 10 pm, take meditation or nap breaks, eat more frequent, small meals and use DHEA to balance cortisol.

Deficient Cortisol

If your cortisol level is too low and you tire easily, you may be experiencing early stages of adrenal failure. Also, since cortisol is necessary to maintain sufficient growth hormone levels it is important to have both of these hormone levels in balance. I have noticed that some patients, who were not getting the results they wanted from HGH therapy, were severely deficient in cortisol. These patients began to get major benefits once they also regulated their cortisol level. My own growth hormone levels have benefited greatly by support with cortisol.

Excessively low cortisol levels alert you that you are at risk for adrenal failure, fatigue and faster than normal aging. Licorice root extract will increase the ACTH levels that can bring cortisol back up to a normal range. Using 10 drops of a sublingual licorice root extract at the times of the day or evening where your levels are low can restore proper levels. If licorice root doesn't work, you may need a prescription for 15 to 20 mg of natural hydrocortisone taken one to four times throughout the day.

Proper Sleep and Exercise

While the proper amount of sleep helps reduce stress and reduce elevated cortisol levels, adequate sleep helps bring depressed cortisol levels back into a healthier range. Again, since most of the important hormones are restored during the hours of 10 pm and 2 am, it is best to get to bed no later than 10 pm every night and allow your body time during sleep to heal, recover and rest. You might consider getting to bed earlier, and if you wake earlier than normal but still refreshed, start your day early and then take a nap in the morning before the rest of day. Also, be sure to step out in the daylight with the sunshine on you, without sunglasses, for at least twenty minutes. Outdoor light naturally helps your body to create cortisol, but indoor light is not sufficient for cortisol production.

Exercise helps reduce stress, but excessive exercise can create more stress. To keep healthy cortisol levels, it is best to exercise consistently and sensibly, and get proper sleep. For proper cortisol levels, it is also important to keep a healthy diet to prevent adrenal stress, burnout or failure. And, eating frequent smaller meals helps maintain proper blood sugar, insulin and cortisol levels.