



# STRESS – an Eastern Medicine Point of View

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These are stressful times with the economy under siege and jobs, retirement and investments being threatened. The approaching holidays can be especially stressful. In my medical experience, some of the manifestations of stress include fatigue, insomnia, sugar and salt cravings, appetite changes, depression, anxiety, light headedness, immune system dysfunction and viral infections, fluid retention and weight gain, irritability, and difficulty multi-tasking or handling sudden surprises.

Many of these symptoms are simply a manifestation of various degrees of adrenal dysfunction. Acute and temporary stress can galvanize an adrenal response of increased cortisol and adrenalin that help us survive and surmount the stressor. Long and sustained stress can lead to adrenal fatigue and burnout.

The adrenal gland is important not only for its production of adrenaline and cortisol in emergencies, but also for its effects on the brain's neurotransmitters. Stress can end up suppressing our relaxing neurotransmitters, serotonin and GABA, and accentuating dopamine and norepinephrine (noradrenalin), resulting in a 'wired-and-tired' sensation and difficulty relaxing and sleeping.

The good news is that there are many natural remedies for stress. Obviously, the most direct solution is removing the stress itself and/or changing our response to the stress (through natural methods like meditation, prayer, exercise, massage, breathing exercises, etc.). But it is not the stress as much as it is our response to the stress that causes us to have physical and mental ill health.

There are many nutritional substances in our diet and in supplement form that can curb our reactions to stress. Avoiding foods that are stimulants is helpful, especially foods containing caffeine, sugar, simple carbohydrates and sugar substitutes like Aspartame,<sup>™</sup> Splenda,<sup>™</sup> Saccharin,<sup>™</sup> etc. Nutrients and supplements can promote improved brain calming and support enhanced adrenal function.

Relaxation, from a brain chemistry point of view, is principally the function of the neurotransmitters GABA and serotonin receptors in the brain. Nutrients like niacinamide, magnesium, calcium, B6, kava, valerian, passionflower, theanine and various herbs can support healthy GABA levels and promote relaxation. Serotonin precursors like 5-hydroxytryptophan (5-HTP) and L-Tryptophan have been shown to increase serotonin, promoting improved sleep, moods and a sense of well being. Serotonin precursors provide the additional benefit of down-regulating dopamine production and reducing excitatory, anxiety-promoting neurotransmitters.

Other natural nutrients that support the body when dealing with chronic stress and adrenal fatigue include the Vitamins C, B5 and B6, as they can contribute to cortisol production and release. In Traditional Chinese Medicine, the extract of the herb morinda is a helpful kidney/liver tonic that can be used in times of stress.

Other herbs that can help a body's ability to control the stress response include ramulus, ziziphus and albizia.

Get Well Natural's *Calm Ezz* product contains these three herbal ingredients. Many of my patients who have tried this product have been very satisfied with its stress supporting qualities. I can also attest to how well it works, since I have personally taken *Calm Ezz* and am happy with my results.\*

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