

Solutions

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Stress and Nutrition



Imagine...

You open your eyes from a night's sleep to start your day..... Oh, the endless tasks. Whether you are rushing to get yourself or family members ready, you barely make it out the door on time, only to discover that you forgotten to eat breakfast. After perhaps a pit stop for coffee and fast food, you rush to work. Welcome to the start of another typical day!

Sound familiar?

Everyone experiences stress at one point or another. Stress often helps us to 'get things done'. However, when stress becomes a chronic, relentless way of life, it can affect our health and have long term consequences. You may experience symptoms like anxiety, shallow breathing, muscle tension and fatigue. Over time you may suffer from chronic headaches, mood swings, anger management issues, memory problems, substance abuse, sleep disturbances, weight problems and increased blood pressure.

Experiencing Stress:

When you experience a stressful situation, your body releases stress hormones, including cortisol which enables your body to deal with the stress.

Chronic stress causes your adrenal glands to become overworked and you begin to feel intense fatigue that is not relieved by sleep. The reduced function of the adrenal glands affects many of your body's functions including your metabolism, blood sugar balance and cardiovascular system.

So what do you do?

Aside from reducing your stress level, the next best solution is to help your body deal with the stress. The following nutrients will help to support your adrenal glands:

- **Vitamin C** - bell peppers, spinach, broccoli, dark leafy greens, citrus, berries, cabbage
- **Vitamin B complex** - dark leafy greens, whole grains, beans, nuts, meats
- **Calcium and Magnesium**- dark leafy greens, beans, lentils, nuts, seeds
- **Zinc**- nuts, seeds, organic whole grains, eggs and meat

Eating these foods every 2-3 hours will help to keep your blood sugar stable and prevent further aggravation to your adrenal glands:

- **Protein-rich foods:** beans, lentils, split-peas, hummus, nuts and seeds, nut and seed butters (almond, tahini, cashew, sunflower, pumpkin seed), eggs, fish, quality poultry/red meat/dairy
- **High fibre foods:** fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, lentils, split-peas
- **Cinnamon:** activates insulin receptors on cells

It's also very important to avoid the following foods while dealing with stress, since these stimulate the adrenal glands:

- **Coffee/black tea**
- **Cola**
- **Alcohol**
- **Sugar**

So the next time you start a hectic day..... eat a piece of whole grain toast with cinnamon to fortify those adrenals.

You could also check out *The Eat-Clean Diet* by Tosca Reno for healthy, whole food eating ideas that will help you deal with stress.

Improve Your Well-Being All Year Round With The **Healthy Living Program**

Access online resources at www.fseap.ca

Other helpful links:

View the following websites for information about Nutrition Month activities in your area:

In Ontario:

<http://www.dietitians.ca/Your-Health/Nutrition-Month/ActivityMap.aspx>.



fseap peterborough offers confidential professional assistance on a wide variety of personal and work-related issues. For information and assistance from your EAP, call:

705.742.4258