

Nutrition Bites - Issue 2

Welcome to the Second Issue of Nutrition Bites. This issue I am going to focus on stress and fatigue / low energy. Fatigue and “tired all the time” is experienced by many people today.

The body is an energy producing machine and energy is required for all bodily functions and for the regeneration of all body tissues.

What most people do not realise is that fatigue is not just an isolated symptom that can be treated like some other illness / conditions.

Fatigue is a basic energy imbalance in the body and can be due to many factors such as nutrient deficiencies, poor diet, stress, negative emotions, lack of sleep, food allergies and intolerances, blood sugar imbalances, hormonal imbalances, poor digestion, dehydration, infections, toxicity and glandular imbalances.

How Our Bodies Respond to stress:



Our bodies react to stress the same way whether it be that you are stuck in a traffic jam, have relationship problems, over work or eat poor quality foods.

We all react to stress differently. Genes and our personal characteristics and how we adapt

can determine our ability to cope with stress. We all have our personal thresholds for stress.

Short term acute stress can increase our heart rate and breathing and produce symptoms such as palpitations and panic and anxiety. The hormones adrenalin and noradrenalin are released from the adrenal glands.

Blood is diverted towards the brain and muscles carrying nutrients and oxygen to help us deal with the perceived “threat”. This is known as the “fight or flight syndrome”. Also blood is diverted away from the digestive system so we may experience digestive upsets such as diarrhoea, upset stomach, IBS or

constipation. We also experience increased sensitivity to noise, light and touch as we have a heightened sense of survival. We can snap at people, have skin flare ups, have headaches, muscle tension, cravings, hostility, low mood and feel unable to cope

Longer term stress is predominately mediated by the hormone cortisol. It is the elevated levels of cortisol over time which can start to play havoc with the body and take its toll. It can lead to conditions such as high cholesterol and high blood pressure, fatigue, poor sleep, insulin resistance and blood sugar problems, weight gain, lowered resistance to infections, depression and anxiety, weakness and pain in the muscles and increased risk of osteoporosis.

There are 3 stages of stress—alarm stage, resistance stage and exhaustion stage.

Stress Facts:

During stress our bodies consume up to 30% of all our nutrients from food straight away so we can see how it is easy to become nutrient deficient. Free radicals are produced when we are under stress and these damage our bodies cells and accelerated the ageing process.

Our Adrenal Glands are tiny glands which sit upon our kidneys and they are our stress Glands—they help your body to respond to stress, maintain energy and regulate immune system, blood pressure and blood sugar control. Today it is very easy for these glands to become imbalanced.

Foods that help with Stress + Fatigue

While we may not be able to influence all external stressors we can help our body to cope with the effects. So in the anti-stress larder:

Always eat breakfast as this boosts our metabolism and energy in the morning. Eat small frequent meals and snacks to balance blood sugar and keep energy stable. Snack on fruit and nuts, oatcakes and nut butter / hummous / cottage cheese instead of sugary or fatty snacks.



Focus on wholegrains such as oats, wholemeal bread and pasta, potatoes and brown rice. These can help stimulate the brain's feel good hormones—endorphins.

Eat good quality proteins such as fish, lean meats, turkey, chicken, cottage cheese, natural yoghurt, beans, lentils and eggs. Eat green leafy veg and other veg such as asparagus, broccoli, spinach, parsley, garlic, carrots, onions, avocados, citrus fruits, berries.

Eat essential fatty acids found in oily fish, nuts, seeds and their oils such as walnut oil and flaxseed oil.

Go easy on or avoid energy drainers and foods which stress the body further and increase anxiety and deplete the body of nutrients such as alcohol coffee, cakes, biscuits, sweets, processed foods, fizzy drinks, fatty foods etc

Nutrients and herbs which can help with stress and fatigue

The long term effects of stress mean we are constantly living on our nerves and up vital nutrients. It is important to replenish all nutrients but a few which have particular importance for stress and fatigue are:

Vitamin C—supports our stress glands and important for the immune system and healing. **B Vitamins** are anti-stress vitamins and used up in large amounts during stress. They are also important for our adrenal glands and nervous system. **Magnesium** is a calming mineral and supports the nervous system. **Iron** is important for energy and **Zinc** is vital for our immune system, blood sugar control, healing and our reproductive systems. Herbs such as **astragalus**, **rhodiola** and **ginseng** can help strengthen and improve the body's overall ability to cope with the effects of stress. Calming herbs include oats, passionflower, hops and valerian. It is important to contact a qualified Nutritional Therapist to tailor a programme to your needs and to discuss any medication you are on.

Tips to help Beat Stress and Fatigue

- Obviously good nutrition is only one aspect of helping your body and mind cope with stress but it is a vital

component. Other suggestions are: Look at lifestyle factors which can promote stress and fatigue eg too much work, poor time management, too little sleep. Try to simplify your life in any way possible and reduce any pressure you can. Try to have 10-15 mins out daily to do nothing—just be, listen to your breathe, day dream. This really helps to replenish energy.



- It is important for the body to heal and regain strength to get plenty of rest and relaxation. Try Tai Chi, yoga, pilates, relaxing baths, relaxing music, deep breathing and meditation. Meditation has been proven to be anti-ageing and

healing to the body. It is important that we nourish and take care of ourselves as well as others. Book a facial, massage or any other treatment you find relaxing.

- Try an energy therapy such as acupuncture, reflexology, homeopathy or reiki.

- Appropriate exercise is important—find something you enjoy and move your body. However if you are in burnout it is better to do gentle exercise such as yoga, walking, swimming and stretching.

- Fresh air is vital for wellbeing and nourishes the soul. Try walking outside in nature—it is very calming and therapeutic.

- Deal with any negative emotions you have—anger, fear, frustration, worry, negative thoughts— they all drain the body of energy and add to your total stress load.

Identify any negative coping patterns you have eg smoking, over eating, dependence on alcohol, drugs etc, emotional outbursts. See a counselor or cognitive therapist or hypnotherapist if you need help in this area.

- Try to have kind thoughts about yourself and others.

- Try to show gratitude for the good things in your life. Have a Hair Mineral Analysis Test which can indicate imbalances in stress and energy pathways, mineral deficiencies and imbalances and the impact this can have on your overall health.