

# Overstressed? Run-down and Feel It?

Are you running your body down with chronic over-stress? A healthy body has significant reserves to deal with stress. But a lengthy period of stress combined with bad lifestyle choices will run things down, and you will often look it. Part of this state is mild “adrenal fatigue” (we’re not talking about the medical version of severe adrenal insufficiency — Addison’s disease here). You may feel like you’re handling the stress fine – but your body may not be.

The adrenal glands sit on the kidneys. They help your body tissues deal with stress, help the energising fight/flight response, keep inflammation down, and manage the body’s salt balance. Obviously if your adrenals are overworked with chronic stress, these things become issues. Like a car, the harder and longer you want to run the engine, the more your water pump and radiator need to keep up or things will overheat and eventually seize.

Depending on your body’s



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weaknesses, you may experience different symptoms.

Common ones are: patches of dry problem itchy skin, waking up tired (feeling like you could sleep in until 10am), irritable or depressed mood, increased or new allergies (sensitivities), low sex drive, constant mild infections. A tendency for puffiness around the eyes, general daytime tiredness

with a pickup in energy after 10pm and a feeling of relief after a hot greasy high-salt meal (or possibly a drink) are other possible indicators.

The general strategy is to take workload off your adrenals to let them recover. Gradually come off stimulant drinks. Make sure you get to sleep before 10pm a few nights a week. Sort out the stressors in your life and free up some quiet time.

Have regular meals and increase your fruit and vegetable intake, but realise that your body will still need oily/salty/protein-rich food while it’s dealing with stress, particularly first thing in the morning (that’s one reason why cooked breakfasts in moderate servings are fab). Gradually increase your level of exercise and physical activity. Meditate. Warning — sudden dramatic changes can result in more, not less, stress! Be forewarned that it can take months to recover from long-term adrenal fatigue.

This content reflects personal opinions of Dr Tat Loo, a Dunedin-based chiropractor.

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