



Adrenal Function

No bigger than a walnut and weighing less than a grape, each of your two adrenal glands sits like a tiny pyramid on top of a kidney (“ad” “renal” means “over” the “kidneys”). But don’t let their size fool you; these powerful little endocrine glands manufacture and secrete steroid hormones such as cortisol, estrogen and testosterone that are essential for life, health and vitality. They modulate the functioning of every tissue, organ and gland in your body to maintain homeostasis during stress and keep you alive. They also have important effects the way you think and feel.

The main purpose of your adrenals is to enable your body to deal with stress from every possible source, ranging from injury and disease to work and relationship problems. They largely determine the energy of your body’s responses to every change in your internal and external environment. Whether they signal attack, retreat or surrender, every cell responds accordingly, and you feel the results. It is through the actions of the adrenal hormones that your body is able to mobilize its resources to escape or fight off danger (stress) and survive in a more primitive society that would mean being able to run away quickly, fight or pursue an enemy or game, endure long periods of physical challenge and deprivation, and store up physical reserves when they are available.

In modern society, these same responses are triggered by such circumstances as difficult boss, air pollution, family quarrels, financial problems, too little sleep, infections and overindulgence in or sensitivities to food or substance abuse. If your adrenal function is low, as it is in adrenal fatigue, your body has difficulty responding and adapting properly to these stresses. * This can lead to a variety of physical and psychological health problems that are themselves a further source of stress.*