



So What Exactly is Stress?

What happens to our bodies during stress?

Stress is a normal part of everyday life. Stress occurs when demands placed upon us exceed our body's ability to cope. Body's response to stress "fight or flight" occurs automatically. The adrenal gland releases stress hormones. Cortisol, adrenaline, corticosterone gives you a boost of energy and strength to "fight."

Or "flee."

Makes sense when faced with a physical threat. But this same response also helps us deal with more subtle but equally stressful psychological or emotional demands. For example, it can help enhance your focus, allowing you to perform optimally at work or improve mental clarity, which allows you to deal with a conflict. Some stress and our body's response to it is good. It helps us to deal with emergencies. When the stressful situation has passed, the hormone levels naturally decline.

Stress that becomes chronic, or ongoing, creates problems. Stress hormones have other not so obvious effects. They play a role in metabolism, inflammation, and immune and nervous system responses. So when our body is continually bombarded by high levels of cortisol and corticosterone our digestive function can become impaired leading to increased appetite, and weight gain, our nervous system can be damaged leading to anxiety or depression, and our immune system can be suppressed leading to sickness or even autoimmune diseases. So, while we don't want to turn off the stress response, we don't want to remain in a state of continual stress.

Adaptogenic herbs can recharge your adrenal glands helping you to respond to stress. These herbs do not alter, but rather help the body function optimally during times of stress, using the body's natural response to physical and emotional stress.

Herbs that have adaptogen properties and calming effects on the body and support the nervous system are: Holy basil, chamomile, valerian root, mint, passion flower, bach flower rescue remedy.

Conclusion: Stress is linked to many aspects of both physical and mental health. Over time, stress can negatively affect digestion and immune systems. While the underlying causes of stress must be examined before one can truly heal oneself, dietary supplements can aid in the process.