

Relax and lose weight!

If you just can't seem to lose those stubborn pounds, it may be your stress hormone, Cortisol. This silent killer is a hormone made in your body every time you feel stressors.

Normal levels in the brain allow for enhanced memory and sustained energy. Cortisol is released in the brain once danger / stress is sensed. Your alarmed body goes in to the "Fight or Flight" response mode. Once the adrenaline wears down, the Cortisol acts to trigger your body to replenish wasted energy and "EAT NOW!" Eating helps relax the brain with good pleasure chemicals.

The real problem lies with our world's constant stressors of all sorts along with the inability to alleviate your tension. When your daily stressors add up, the Cortisol production never shuts off. The dangers are severe and will drastically affect your fitness and health. You lose muscle mass as your testosterone and metabolism plummet and the immune system becomes less efficient. Your body will not replenish energy or respond to infections / inflammation. Your fat increases largely near vital organs & daily blood pressure and sugar levels go haywire. Not to mention that the eating *does not satisfy* the craving, so you consume extra calories daily!

Luckily there are a few things you can do when stressed that may save your life. First remember, "Fight or Flight" are both exercises (physical activity). Turning to exercising when you are stressed out is a great idea since exercise will pump your blood quickly, which will in turn cleanse your body of this stress hormone. Yoga has also been proven by Indian researchers to improve mental health, tension and tightness in as little as 10 days. Many pros in the NFL and NBA, like Jordan Farmar and Amani Toomer are publicly open about their success.

If you drink coffee, switch to decaf. Just 3 cups of java raises Cortisol levels 25% for 3 hours (6 cups = 30% increase all day). When you drink coffee, take off the lid and fill the room with its aroma. The scents have been proven by Korean scientists to greatly lower your stress!

Breakfast is crucial for your body to escape depletion of vitamins B & C, magnesium & calcium, which will raise Cortisol levels. Without these you feel lazy and drained. By eating berries or orange juice, you will include Vitamin C in your diet. Yogurts will combine amounts of calcium and magnesium. Whole grains will support Vitamin B intake, then you would be "perfect!" In general, beware of crash diets, since the stress on your body can raise 18% and create sugar spikes which can interfere with your goals.

Vent with a frustrated co-worker. Mental stress often goes unnoticed. This prevents burnout and also helps you to not redirect it towards your beloved family and friends. We all know the stress your daily routine and relationships can cause.

Relax! Sleep more and watch the weight loss happen. Lack of sleep produces a hunger hormone and raises Cortisol. A good night's rest is the *most effective* method of reducing stress.

A study at the University of Chicago concluded, “sleeping 6 ½ -7 hours can lead to increased Cortisol, raised appetite and weight gains. 7-9 hours are needed.”

Take a moment for yourself and slow down. These few ideas are easy to assimilate in to your daily routine. Just always remember that stress is natural and increases your capability, senses and the demands on your body. If the Cortisol accumulates day after day, your health suffers, your force output drops and your athletic efficiency may not lead to your best performances. **So relax and slim down!**

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