

How To Naturally Lower Your Cortisol Levels - The Bodywise Clinic

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How To Naturally Lower Your Cortisol Levels

Do you feel lethargic or experience mood swings or depression? Have you recently noticed weight gain and high blood pressure?

You might have high cortisol levels. Read on to learn out about the effects of elevated cortisol on your health and what you can do about it.

What is Cortisol?

Cortisol is a steroid hormone made in the adrenal cortex and released into the bloodstream. Blood transports cortisol throughout the body and used in every cell receptor. Cortisol controls blood sugar levels, regulates the metabolism, works as an anti-inflammatory, and helps to improve memory function. It also controls the balance of salt and water in the body. Finally, the hormone works to influence your body's blood pressure and helps regulate electrolytes in the body.

Cortisol is also a built-in alarm system that works to help manage the body's stress. It works with the brain to help regulate motivation, fight-or-flight responses, and moods. The adrenal glands, where cortisol production takes place, are a triangle shaped organ located at the top of each of your kidneys.

If your body has too much cortisol, it can completely derail its vital functions. You'll have more anxiety, depression, memory issues, digestive issues, sleep disorders and rapid weight gain. So no guessing that it's pretty important to maintain proper cortisol levels.

Learn how to maintain healthy cortisol levels by following these guidelines.

Manage Stress

- Stress can cause a myriad of health issues so it's important to learn to let things go and allow your body to recover. Over-exercising, work stress, relationship stress, and environmental stresses can set you on road to illness and disease. Get some rest and give your body adequate time to recover from these stresses.

- Take time to go for a walk. Walking is the most natural form of exercise we can do. Millions of years of evolution have given us two legs that move us around. Our bodies work better when we are mobile. You'll feel your body and mind relax once you start walking. Meet up with some friends and chat while you stroll.
- Stress is often the result of introspection. We focus too much on our own problems. Removing that intense focus by joining groups, communities, and helping others can work wonders.
- Laugh! It's a great way to reduce stress. According to a [study in the US National Library of medicine](#), laughter can reduce stress and improve immune function.
- Learn how powerful the acts of [mindfulness and meditation](#) can be for helping your mind and body cope. Train your body to switch to calm mode and learn how to relax. This will go far in helping you to manage and maintain your stress levels and reduce your cortisol levels.



Get The Right Amount of Exercise

High cortisol levels are associated with weight gain. If you're struggling with getting some exercise in your daily routine, try simple changes to add some movement.

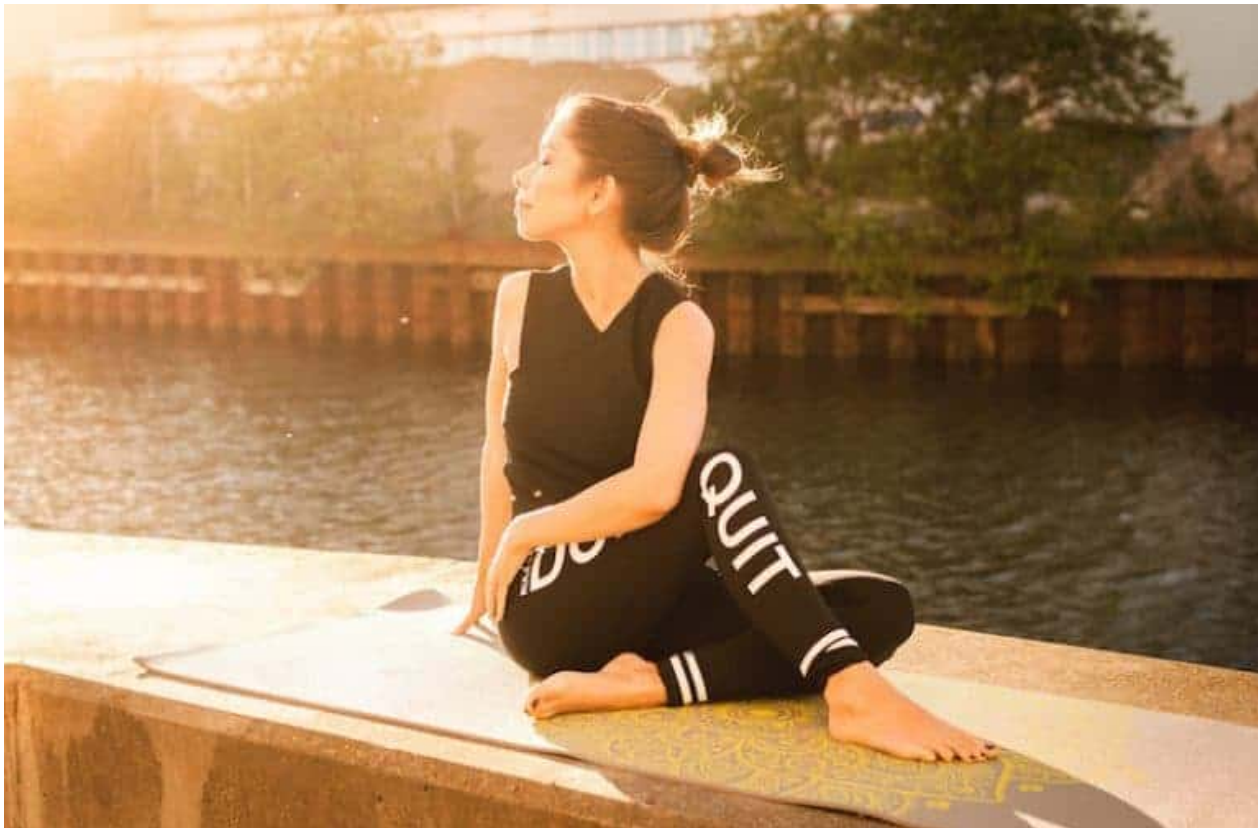
Remember that intense exercise for long periods can actually increase blood cortisol. If your goal

is to reduce cortisol levels, then you need to reduce exercise intensity or duration to a point where your body recovers easily.

Quick everyday ways to get that extra bit of exercise in:

- Park in the furthest car park from the office and walk to your desk.
- Step off the bus, train, taxi 5-10 minutes walk from your work and continue on foot.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Do 5-10 minutes of yoga before and after work.

Start simple and move on from there. You should try to cultivate a habit of doing these exercises daily. Make them part of your routine.



Improve Your Diet

- Eating clean, [high-quality foods will not only reduce inflammation](#) and maintain healthy blood sugar levels, it will indirectly help fight high cortisol levels. The extra energy you'll get from real foods will motivate you to exercise. And as we've seen, exercise is a stress reliever (good for reducing cortisol) and can help you lose pounds (lower weight is good for combating high blood cortisol levels).

- Increase your fibre and essential nutrients so that your hormones will balance out. Your adrenal glands will work better and help you feel more energetic. With more energy comes better focus during the day and better at night.
- Avoid foods high in sugar, pre-packaged and refined. Eliminate sugary snacks and replace them with healthier options such as seeds and nuts, high fibre products.
- Limit your [caffeine intake](#) and reduce your alcohol intake.
- Choose healthy fats over trans fats and look for products that don't include trans fats (check the labels). Eat plenty of protein and get plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables into your diet. Remember, the less processed the fruits and vegetables, the better.
- Sip herbal teas that are soothing such as chamomile and lavender. Use herbal beverages as replacements for sugary drinks. These drinks not only promote relaxation in the body, they help reduce your intake of cortisol-raising sugar.



Try Alternative Therapies

Consider [acupuncture](#) or [dry needling](#). For thousands of years, Chinese medicine has included acupuncture. This can help to reduce stress and help you to relax. It can also help with joint pain, fertility issues, sleeping issues and headaches.

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Try some deep breathing techniques. This will help your body to learn to relax and improve your oxygenation in your cells. It can reduce anxiety and help you to focus on your heart rate.

Try a [massage to help improve lymph function](#), reduce stress, and help your body to relax.



Get Regular Sleep & Rest

Set a regular bedtime and time to get up in the morning. By setting times, your body is more likely to adjust to this and you'll start to feel healthier. A body that gets [plenty of rest](#) is far more able to deal with stress and regulate the cortisol levels.

Use essential oils that promote relaxation such as lavender, bergamot, and frankincense. Your body will reduce inflammation and begin to relax more. Consider using these in a diffuser so that you can smell them throughout your living area or office.

Listen to your body and learn to identify when you need to take a nap break. Focus on your body's natural intuition and give in to that desire for a nap now and then.

Blood cortisol levels are high in the morning. This helps us get ready for the day. The level drops

off as the day progresses. For healthy sleep patterns, the level of cortisol in our blood should be much lower at night than in the morning. This creates a rhythm of ebbs and flows of the hormone.



how to get more sleep – avoid sleep deprivation

The Role of Cortisol and Melatonin

The hormones cortisol and melatonin play a very important part in the healthy function of your body. Focusing on the former at the expense of the latter will lead to trouble. How do these hormones interact and what happens when they work in harmony?

Melatonin is produced in the pineal gland and in some other bodily tissues. In simple terms, the melatonin hormone's function is [regulating sleep](#). Your body produces higher levels in the evening, just before you go to bed. This is in contrast to cortisol, which your body produces in greater quantities in the morning.

An essential factor for melatonin production is darkness. Production of the hormone ceases when you expose your body to bright lights. That's why using electronic devices late at night can interfere with your sleeping patterns. You can still fall asleep, but your body's natural sleep enhancer isn't produced to the optimal levels. So sleep might be more difficult and less restoring.

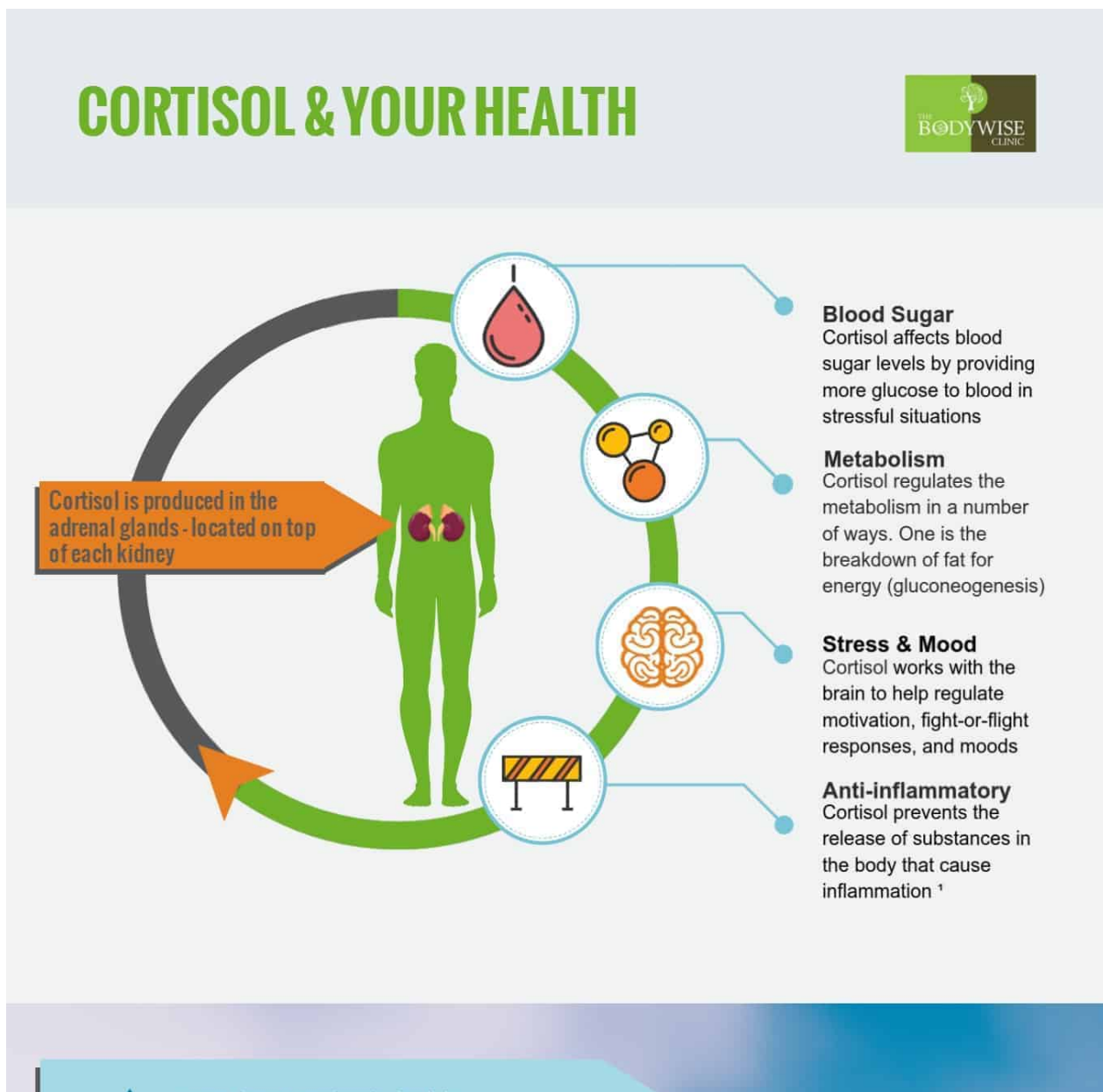
Lower melatonin levels adversely influence cortisol levels. As melatonin helps regulate the levels of cortisol in the body, lower levels of the hormone let cortisol levels run high. Both hormones work together in our bodies to keep [inflammation](#) (which is necessary in many cases) at required

work together in our bodies to keep [inflammation](#) (which is necessary in many cases) at required levels and the immune function working.

Imbalances lead to sleep disturbances and this further raises cortisol, which often leads us to eat more sugar to boost energy, and so the negative cycle continues. Not to mention the added stress from both lack of sleep and elevated levels of cortisol.

Supplementing with Melatonin is an option but there are side effects to deal with.

The natural way to increase melatonin is to help your body make its own. **Magnesium** is a mineral that can aid sleep so supplementing with this mineral can indirectly improve melatonin levels (thanks to better sleep patterns). **Vitamin B6 and B12** are important vitamins used by our bodies for the production of melatonin and are safe to supplement with.





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Go For A Walk
Walking is one of the best exercises for relaxing the mind and body.



Meditate
Train your body to switch to calm mode and learn how to relax



Laugh
laughter can reduce stress and improve immune function.



Adjust your focus
Join a community and help others. Try to focus on others.

Improve Your Diet



Reduce Caffeine
Limit your caffeine intake and reduce your alcohol intake



Change Fats
Choose healthy fats over trans fats



Drink Herbal Teas
Use herbal beverages as replacements for sugary drinks.

3 ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES

TO HELP REDUCE CORTISOL



1. Acupuncture & Dry Needling



2. Deep Breathing Exercises



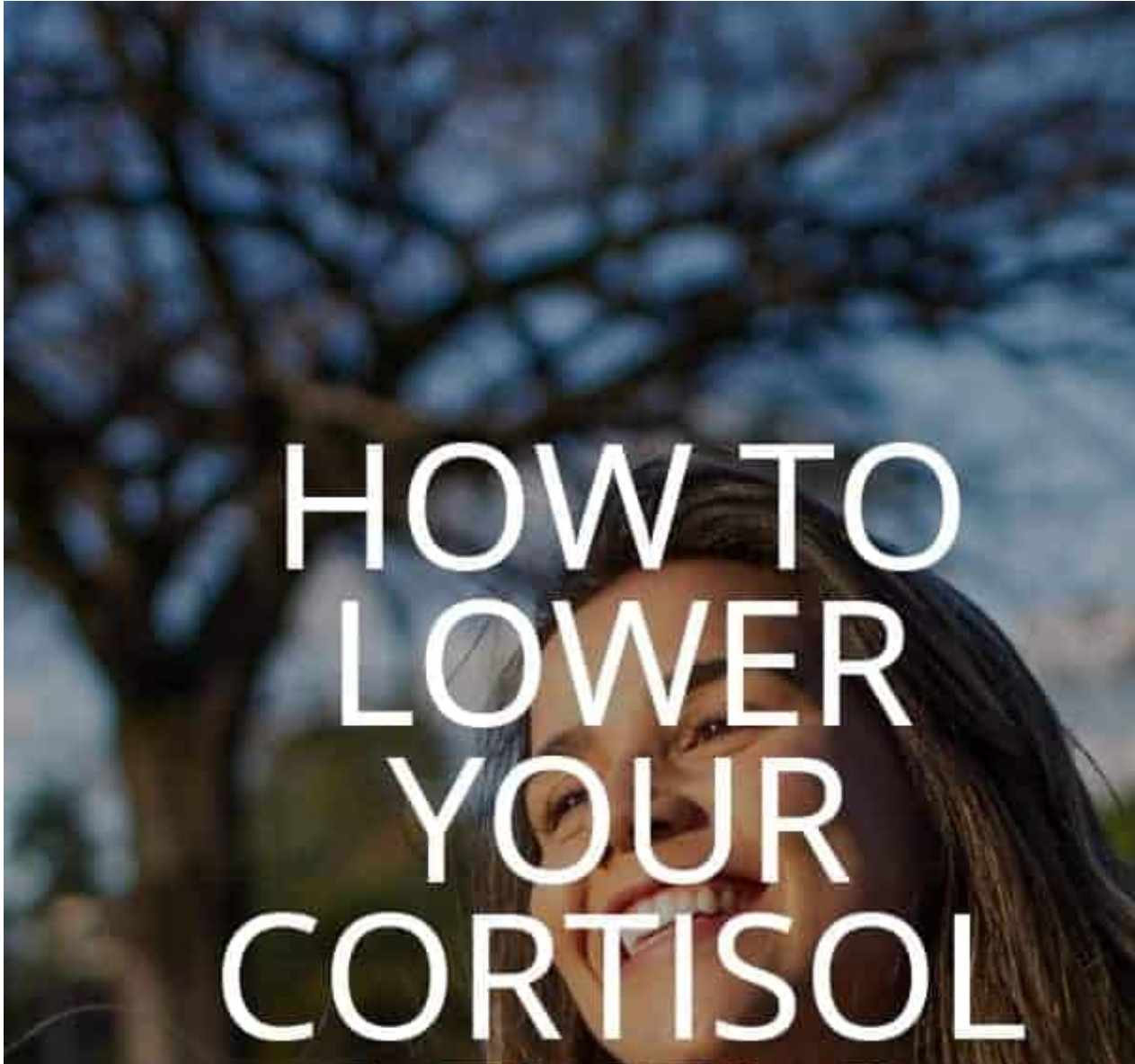
3. Lymphatic Drainage Massage

SOURCES

1. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cortisol>

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