

FINDING THE Energy

Tired, stressed and feeling they're burning the candle at both ends, women are more likely than men to suffer from adrenal fatigue. But whether they link feeling burnt out to that condition is unclear. ■ BY JANET POVEROMO

The adrenal medulla, the inner part of the adrenal gland, is not essential to life, but helps a person in coping with physical and emotional stress. Adrenals were constructed for dealing with temporary emergencies, but when modern stresses are excessive—often hitting women the hardest—the adrenal cortex can become exhausted.

"Adrenal fatigue among women is directly related to what we think of as 'stress,'" said Bill Chioffi, director of education with Gaia Herbs Inc. (Brevard, NC). "Stress is the body's response to an environmental pressure. It is clear that stress has become epidemic in much of Western culture."

According to The American Institute of Stress, up to 75 to 90 percent of doctor visits in the United States are stress related, Chioffi pointed out. An estimated 19 million people in the U.S. are affected by stress- and anxiety-related conditions each year, yet less than a third actually seek treatment. Additionally, 43 percent of this group are depressed and often have alcohol or substance-abuse problems.

"One of the key stressors in today's lifestyle is work," Chioffi added. "The Washington Business Group on Health found 46 percent of all employees in the United States to be severely stressed, even to the point of burnout, and women are twice as likely to be affected as men. It is fair to assume that

most women are aware that they are 'stressed out' and the signs are obvious, but whether they link that to adrenal fatigue and it's signs is unclear."

"Women are very aware of the impact of stress, but do not necessarily equate it with adrenal fatigue," agreed Roy Upton, herbalist and general manager with Planetary Herbals (Scotts Valley, CA). "They are even less familiar with products that may be beneficial."

Help for a Healthy Adrenal System

Though adrenal burnout mostly occurs with women, adrenal tonics are the same for males and females.

Schisandra, reishi mushroom, American ginseng, licorice root, Siberian ginseng (eleuthero), holy basil, ashwagandha, cordyceps; adaptogens and tonics, in general, all support a healthy adrenal system, said Upton.

"Additionally, calmatives such as albizia, passionflower, skullcap and chamomile can help take the edge off the occasional anxiety that occurs due to adrenal overdrive."

In addition, healthy blood sugar levels and adequate sleep patterns are both very important to adrenal health. The former helps prevent insulin spikes and the resultant spikes in cortisol (stress response) that occur, while the latter helps prevent adrenalin spikes that occur as a physiological coping

response to insufficient rest, or burning the candle at both ends.

"There are many herbal formulations that support healthy adrenal response. Planetary Herbals' Schisandra Adrenal Complex has always sold well for the 'always on the go, skipping meals, going to bed late, overachiever type As'," added Upton. "Holy basil has become a cortisol-balancing staple in the American health food industry in recent years. Ashwagandha has been ayurveda's prime adaptogen; and cordyceps, reishi mushroom, and Siberian ginseng are among China's stars in the adaptogen category."

Gaia Herbs' Adrenal Health formula is currently the company's best-selling product out of over 300, and is also a top seller in many health food stores, according to Chioffi.

Other products selling well are vitamin and mineral combinations, the amino acid L-theanine, various flower essences and homeopathic medicines such as Calm's Forte by Hylands.

"In general," Chioffi added, "women should focus on a diet rich in fresh vegetables and fruits, especially berries rich in antioxidants, and avoid alcohol, excessive caffeine (more than one or two cups of coffee a day)

and other stimulants, fried foods, foods high in saturated fats and excess sugar."

Gaia Herbs is now offering a new product that provides support for one of the main issues involved with adrenal fatigue in women. SleepThru™, a blend of herbs known to support long, restful sleep and healthy adrenal function, utilizes the company's patented Vegetarian





Are the Adrenal Glands the Problem?

- In the book *Real Cause Real Cure*, by Jacob Teitelbaum, MD and Bill Gottlieb, the authors list ways that the adrenal glands let you know they're worn out:
- You're fatigued first thing in the morning and find it hard to get out of bed.
 - You're tired all the time—and when you're under stress, you're even more tired.
 - You like the energy you feel when you're dealing with a crisis, because it's one of the few times you actually feel energetic.
 - When you're hungry, you feel intensely irritable. ("Feed me now, or I'll kill you!" is a thought you might be having.)
 - You have frequent infections such as sore throats and colds, and they take quite a while to clear up.
 - You sometimes feel dizzy when you stand up.

For those under constant stress and experiencing one or more of these symptoms, the authors recommend adrenal support: an eating pattern that keeps your blood sugar on an even keel, plus supplements that revitalize your adrenal glands.

Liquid Phyto-Cap delivery system. When the body's stress pathways are naturally supported, one can rest with more ease and consistency, Chioffi said.

Planetary Herbals formulations are based on the principles and practices of Chinese herbalism and the more than 40 years of clinical experience of renowned herbalist and author, Michael Tierra, Upton explained. "Because the use of tonics is central to Chinese herbalism, Planetary Herbals has been a leader in introducing tonics and adaptogens to the natural products market," he said. "The many stories we have heard of the benefits consumers have experienced from using our adrenal support products have been gratifying."

Albizia is the company's recent introduction for stress and occasional anxiety. "An almost unheard of botanical in North America, albizia in China is known as *he huan hua*, or the *tree of happiness*," said Upton. "While not widely researched, a few studies have confirmed its calming and antioxidant effects. Albizia is one of the truly amazing herbs of Chinese herbalism that lifts the spirits wonderfully while taking the edge off of occasional anxiety dramatically."



In the interest of science, "as an herbal manufacturer, we are always interested in compelling studies on botanicals," said Chioffi. "Especially when those studies are conducted on humans and using herbal products that are accessible to the general public. Unfortunately, human clinical trials using botanical medicines as they are sold in health food stores are far and few between." To this end, Chioffi said Gaia Herb's is committed to conducting pilot trials using its botanical products. Dr. Michael Traub, ND, a member of Gaia Herb's Scientific Advisory Board, is currently setting up a sleep study for Gaia Herbs products.

Visibility in Stores

Both manufacturers agree retailers should place products that address adrenal fatigue in several areas.

"Many retailers place adrenal products in the glandular section along with thyroid products," noted Chioffi. "While this does make sense, it is also a very good idea to merchandise these products in the 'Stress' section. While many people are aware that they 'stressed out,' few realize that it is the adrenal system that is impacted."

Chioffi said he finds it interesting that Gaia's Adrenal Health product and Stress Response are identical formulas with different names, yet, the Adrenal

Health is the company's bestseller. "It is doing well in the new 180-count value size as well, which is another positive trend in the marketplace," he said.



Endcaps highlighting the breadth of products that stores offer are extremely valuable, said Upton.

"Herbal tonics can benefit most every customer at some point in their week, so retailers have a tremendous opportunity to help their consumers through education," he said. Tonics is also a category that

should be promoted for the general health benefits they offer, he added.

"Of course," Upton concluded, "supplements should be accompanied by the general instructions regarding overall health such as avoiding excessive stress, regular exercise, adequate sleep, stress reduction and conscious happiness, so we teach people not to just rely on pills, whether pharmaceuticals or supplements." **VR**

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