



September 2006
Volume 1, Issue 2

Inside this Issue

- 1 • Stress and Heart Disease
- 2 • Ashwagandha
- 3 • Stress Plus with Valerian
• Zhen's Gypsy Tea
- 4 • Health Cooking with Wholesome Foods
• Living and Holism
• COMING EVENTS

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September-October Newsletter

Stress and Heart Disease

From 'Heart Health With Natural Medicine' © 2005

Chronic anger, anxiety, depression, and feelings of lack of control increase risk of heart disease.

Chronic stress exposes your body to unhealthy, persistently elevated levels of stress hormones like adrenaline and cortisol. According to findings by researchers at Duke University Medical Center, people with heart disease can lower their risk of subsequent cardiac events by over 70% if they learn how to manage stress. Researchers say that patients with coronary vessel disease and ischemia who learned stress management had a lower risk of a future heart attack or of needing cardiac surgery than those who underwent exercise training or those who received standard cardiac rehabilitation care (often involving drugs).

These findings are significant. People who underwent four months of stress management training had only a 9% incidence of cardiac events, defined as heart surgery, angioplasty, myocardial infarction (heart attack), or death compared to 30% of patients who received usual medical care.

Studies also link stress to changes in the way blood clots, which increases the risk of heart attack.

Stress is NOT always psychological. Many times poor health is the cause of physical stress as a result of illness and deficiency of vital nutrients. Stress reduction that comes from lifestyle changes alone will not correct these

imbalances. Attention must be paid to giving your *total self* what you need.

Most of us experience feelings of stress, and often feelings of distress. Those who experience difficulty engaging meaningfully in life within the current social structure find themselves confronted with numerous feelings of frustration, alienation, loss of dignity and despair. These can manifest in a variety of psycho/physiologic ills. The environment, on which we depend for our very survival and sustenance, suffers from increasing levels of toxicity and is a reliable indicator of the degree of physical strain we all struggle with on a daily basis.

Below are some common stressors that can affect people at all stages of life.

- Illness, either personal or of a family member or friend
- Death of a friend or loved one
- Problems in a personal relationship
- Work overload
- Starting a new job
- Unemployment
- Retirement
- Pregnancy
- Crowds
- Relocation
- Daily hassles
- Legal problems
- Financial concerns
- Perfectionism

Remaining hopeful and trust in our own body's ability to heal is vital to preventing *distress*.

The Stress Response

When your brain perceives a threat through any of the situations listed above as well as others, it activates the

stress response, stress hormones and chemicals are released and instantly affect every system in your body. This happens whether the threat is actual or based on what we believe.

The stress response can be very positive. It's what helps with reaction time for instance when you need to avoid hitting another driver with your car. It is also triggered if you are worrying about something that might happen in the future. Your brain does not see a difference between real and imagined threats when it triggers the stress response. It simply reacts. When this stress reaction kicks in, every organ system in your body is affected by the stress response. Some of these effects include:

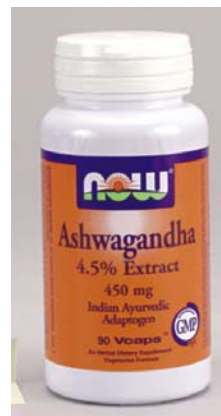
- **Pulse rate increases.** The heart beats faster to increase the blood flow to the brain and the large muscles.
- **Elevated blood pressure.** While the heart is beating faster the small arteries in the arms and legs contract and this results in a raise in your blood pressure. Too much stress can cause chronic high blood pressure. It can damage the lining of arteries and also increase cholesterol build-up in the damaged arteries.
- **Faster breathing rate.** Similar to the faster blood rate and increase in blood pressure, breathing becomes more rapid to provide more oxygen and release carbon dioxide.
- **Metabolic Response.** Again, in response to the demand for increased performance from the body we see an automatic release of sugars and fats into the Bloodstream. This release of sugars into the blood provides energy during a stress response. In fact, chronic stress responses make it very hard for diabetics to regulate their blood sugar levels.
- **Muscle tension.** Part of the 'fright/flight' response, large muscles tense to prepare for

physical activity. Muscles in the shoulders, neck, lower back, and legs are affected. As this stress becomes prolonged or even chronic the muscles adopt a kind of rigidity with deep and unresolved tension. This can often add pain as a stress factor of its own.

- **Slow digestion.** When the body is responding to stress the central nervous system directs energy away from digestion and slows the digestive process significantly. People may have indigestion, ulcers, and bowel problems. Of course another serious implication of this diversion is that food is not properly metabolized and essential nutrients are not delivered to organs.
- **Mood fluctuations.** While the stress response puts you on high alert mentally and emotionally to deal with situations long-term and chronic stress can increase anxiety, depression, and fatigue. This becomes a cycle that can be very difficult to step out of without taking firm action.
- **Immune system suppression or exhaustion.** The entire orchestra of immune response that would normally be engaged in fighting infections in the body is decreased during stress. The more long-term the stress, the more the immune system can become compromised. Infectious illnesses are more likely to develop when we have been under stress for a long time. Colds and flu often follow times of stress as the total body system has become vulnerable and in fact even more serious illness can often follow as a result of prolonged stress.

End

Ashwagandha Supporting Your Body's Ability to Deal With Stress



Ashwagandha, also known as Winter Cherry and Indian Ginseng, is an Indian herb commonly used in the practice of Ayurvedic Medicine. A loose translation of the name means the "strength of 10 horses".

Ashwagandha helps the body adapt to stress, but it also rebuilds the nervous system without stimulating it. Ashwagandha has remarkable stress-relieving properties which some studies reveal may be comparable to those of several commonly prescribed drugs used to treat depression and anxiety. In addition to its excellent protective effects on the nervous system, ashwagandha may be a promising alternative treatment for a variety of degenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

Ashwagandha has powerful antioxidant properties that seek and destroy the free radicals that have been implicated in aging and numerous disease states. Stress, environmental toxins, and poor nutrition all have a detrimental impact on our nervous systems. Recent scientific studies support ashwagandha's ability not only to relieve stress, but also suggest Ashwagandha may offer some protection to brain cells against the deleterious effects of our modern lifestyles.

For example, in a study published in Phytomedicine in December of 2000 ashwagandha has been demonstrated to be as effective as some tranquilizers and antidepressant drugs. Specifically, oral administration of ashwagandha for five days suggested anxiety-relieving effects

similar to those achieved by the anti-anxiety drug lorazepam (Ativan®), and antidepressant effects similar to those of the prescription antidepressant drug imipramine (Tofranil®).

In one of the most complete human clinical trials to date, researchers studied the effects of a standardized extract of ashwagandha on the negative effects of stress, including elevated levels of the stress hormone cortisol. Many of the adverse effects of stress are thought to be related to elevated levels of cortisol. The participants reported increased energy, reduced fatigue, better sleep, and an enhanced sense of well-being. In addition, the participants showed several measurable improvements, including a reduction of cortisol levels up to 26%.

The chemical components in ashwagandha are remarkably similar to those found in ginseng, and yet studies have demonstrated its superiority in stress-relieving abilities when compared to its Chinese cousin. Ayurvedic healers have long prescribed the herb to treat exhaustion caused by both physical and mental strain, and scientific research has recently borne out this practice. A double-blind study found that ashwagandha prevented stress-related ulcers and vitamin C deficiency, and increased energy and endurance when under stress.

Ashwagandha is effective for insomnia but does not act as a sedative. It helps the body address a stress related condition rather than masking it with sedatives. It is a herb that rejuvenates the nervous system and helps with insomnia and stress.

Ashwagandha may be the best herb to take for the support of adrenal exhaustion. Caffeine, nicotine, processed foods and processed sugar take their toll on the Adrenal glands and leave the victim fatigued, depressed and often bewildered as to what to do with themselves. Ashwagandha may help the Adrenals recover quickly to a balanced state assuming of course that the contributing bad habits are stopped.

End

Stress Plus with Valerian



Some 1400 chemical changes occur as stress hormones sap the body of important nutrients, such as the important complex of B vitamins, vitamin C, and the mineral magnesium.

Hormones like cortisol actually rob the body of vitamins that

support stress responses such as the tensing of muscles and the rise of blood pressure, as well as other reactions fundamental to the fight-or-flight response. Cortisol is the hormone, for example, that triggers the “fight or flight” response to stress that allows us to spring into action when we sense danger. Frequent exposure to high levels of stress hormones exhausts the body's physical resources, impairs learning and memory, and can make people susceptible to depression.

Magnesium

This mineral helps to relax your nerves and muscles. It has also been shown to ease migraines, muscle tension, nausea and depression, all of which can occur as a result of stress. Restful sleep is critical to the body's ability to rejuvenate and restore itself. Even a restful sleep is largely dependent on the body having enough magnesium.

B Vitamins

B Vitamins are commonly associated with: stress, nervousness, anxiety, cardiovascular system, energy, skin, hair and nails, and the immune system. Supplementing the diet with an optimal level of B vitamins may help people who are enduring high levels of stress. In addition to the many benefits of the entire spectrum of B vitamins, choline bitartrate and inositol are of particular importance since these two nutrients may work to prevent fatty deposits in the liver. These deposits are known to

have an adverse effect on the liver's ability to destroy environmental toxins that are directly related to the body's ability to counter the effects of certain forms of environmental stress.

Vitamin C

In one German study researchers subjected 120 people to a stressful situation -a public speaking task combined with math problems. Half of those studied were given 1,000 mg of vitamin C. When measurements were taken signs of stress such as elevated levels of the stress hormone cortisol as well as high blood pressure were significantly greater in those who did not get the vitamin supplement. Those who got vitamin C also reported that they ‘felt’ less stressed when they got the vitamin. The researchers believe that vitamin C should be considered an essential part of stress management. Earlier studies showed that vitamin C abolished secretion of cortisol in animals that had been subjected to repeated stress.

End

Zhena's Gypsy Tea *Beautiful Tea Inside and Out*

Zhena's Gypsy Tea is certified as organically grown, as well as a fair-trade company. “Organic” on the label stands for a commitment to strive for a balance with nature, using methods and materials that are of low impact to the environment.



HEALTHY COOKING *With* WHOLESOME FOODS

Homemade Granola with *Inari!*



If its *Inari* its Organic!

Have fun with this recipe and use it as a basic guide to making your own granola. Add whatever you like.

- 6 cups of *Inari* organic rolled oats (or wild oats)
- 1 cup of unsweetened large flake coconut
- ½ cup of sunflower seed
- ½ cup of pumpkin seed
- ¼ cup of sesame seed
- ½ cup of sliced almonds or pecans
- ¼ cup of whole flax
- 1 cup of vanilla protein powder
- 1 heaping teaspoon of cinnamon

Mix well. Melt ½ cup of butter or coconut oil depending on preference. Add sweetener of your preference. For moistness a wet sweetener is preferred such as Maple Syrup. Combine these two ingredients well and then mix thoroughly with dry ingredients. Dry ingredients should be 'just' somewhat tacky. Not wet. Adjust accordingly.

Bake on a very slow oven (225 F.) for approx. An hour and stir well occasionally so all ingredients brown slightly. Then remove from oven.

As the granola is cooling feel free to stir in ½ a cup of moist raisins. Don't add them before you roast the granola or they'll just turn into hard little nuggets.

Blackened Fish or Chicken



CREOLE SEASONING INGREDIENTS:

- 2 teaspoons ground paprika
- 4 teaspoons dried leaf thyme
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons sea salt
- 2 teaspoons black pepper
- 1 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper, or to your taste
- 1 teaspoon dried leaf oregano
- ¾ teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg

PREPARATION:

Place all ingredients in a jar and store in a cool dark place. Shake jar well before each use.

Over low heat, melt about 1 tablespoon of butter in a nonstick skillet. As soon as the butter is melted, place the fish or boneless breast of chicken sliced thin in the pan, flipping it over to cover both sides with butter. Then generously coat the fish with the seasoning, flip over again and coat the other side with seasoning.

Now turn up the heat to medium-high and cook on one side until blackened and somewhat crispy. Flip over and

cook the other side. Add a little more butter whenever necessary.

End

Living and Holism

'When we put forth all of our creative energy into the generation of a sense of harmony and well being, we begin to live our own dreams. We soon discover that the sense of wellness and hope we all need to find meaning in our lives can truly come from within the creative and the creator. Beauty and Life are experienced as the inspired manifestation of a goodness that is beyond us as individuals.'

From The Healing Way of Beauty © 2000

Dr. Heather Fox Ph.D.

COMING EVENTS

'Health &Lifestyles Showcase – Regina, SK.'

The Health & Lifestyle Showcase is being held at Banner Hall and the Ag-Ex Pavilion, Ipsco Place.

- Friday September 29 - doors open 5:00 pm and close 9:30 pm.
- Saturday September 30 - doors open 10:00 am and close 9:30 pm.
- Sunday October 1- doors open 12:00 pm and close 5:30 pm.

www.lifestyleshowcase.ca