

## DEALING WITH FATIGUE by Jeff Hogrefe R.Ph. with Lyn Hogrefe M.S. Ed.

One of our guiding principles in working with our clients at the Happy Hormone Cottage (HHC) is that it is "never just one thing." We as human beings are far too complex creatures for that. And as a practitioner, this is where drug therapy fails us. To ask a certain medication to do one thing such as lower blood pressure, slow down heart rate etc. is to ignore the thousands of interactions, be it biochemical, neuronal or electrical that go on in our bodies all the time. When dealing with our clients, our first step is always hormone balance. Not just treating hot flashes, night sweats etc. but getting the 3 sex hormones: testosterone, estrogen (of which there are 3 different ones) and progesterone back in balance. Provided that previous synthetic drug therapy hasn't been instituted, this is a relatively easy process and many symptoms of perio and post menopause are abated. Normally this process takes about 3 months to get balanced. This is where the fun begins, or challenges, depending on your viewpoint. Nearly every client we see has the common complaint of fatigue and lack of energy. Sadly, they often describe it as having no joy in life anymore. As I said before, "It is never just one thing" and treating fatigue requires that we attack from many angles and approaches. Because we measure hormone levels with saliva testing at onset, we also include cortisol testing via salivary samples at 4 intervals during the day.

Cortisol testing is a means of looking at the function of the adrenal glands. These tiny 2 glands that sit just above the kidneys don't get much press, but they serve a very important function in secreting DHEA, aldosterone and cortisol. Cortisol is the hormone of stress. Whenever the body senses stress, be it an infection, or an opportunity to speak in public, the brain signals the adrenal gland to release cortisol. Cortisol is sent out to help the body deal with these stressors. Cortisol normally follows a fairly predictable pattern during the day. It elevates just after rising to get you up and going, then gradually decreases until it reaches its lowest point in the evening when you are ready to go to sleep. When dealing with fatigue, I often see irregular cortisol patterns show up in salivary testing. Common things seen are evening elevations in cortisol with the responding issues such as late evening second wind effect and the inability to fall asleep. Also seen are extremely high morning cortisol levels that come crashing down mid-morning. This is classic for people with poor sleep patterns. Other patterns seen include elevated cortisol levels all day for people under constant stress and worst case scenario are clients who have completely flat cortisol levels, where the adrenal glands have just worn out. This is the result of chronic stress for extended periods of time. We call this condition, cortisol insufficiency or Adrenal Fatigue. Based on the severity of the fatigue and the results of our salivary testing, I determine the best course of action. At the HHC, we use a variety of adrenal support products, vitamins, minerals, and herbal supplements to support and rebuild adrenal function to "clinically normal." This process can take several months and also involves nutritional therapy and lifestyle modifications. In dealing with fatigue, it is vital to regain our ability to handle stress!

We will talk more about coping strategies and healing Adrenal Fatigue in the next issue of Single Source News. Until next time, all of us at the Happy Hormone Cottage wish you all the best for a happy and blessed holiday season!