

# WHAT IS ADRENAL FATIGUE?

- Questions and Answers about Adrenal Fatigue with Dr. James Wilson

**1) What is Adrenal Fatigue?** Although there is a more formal definition, when the total demand of stress on the body, sometimes called the "allostatic load", is greater than the capacity of the adrenals to secrete the hormones that compensate for the stress, it leads to adrenal fatigue. In other words, when the adrenal glands are overwhelmed by the demands placed on them by the body, it is adrenal fatigue.

**2) Where did the name come from?** I coined the term "adrenal fatigue" in 1998 at a medical conference to have a simpler, more understandable name than the jaw-breaker medical terms appearing in the literature, such as: hypocortisolemia, hypoadrenocorticism, functional hypoadrenia, non-Addison's hypoadrenia, etc. I wanted a term that was easy to say and that would encapsulate the essence of what was occurring. In truth, the adrenals do not actually fatigue such as a muscle fatigues, but it is common in medicine to have some literary license to use non-exact terms such as "brain fog", "brain fatigue", "burnout", "nervous breakdown". So although the adrenals do not fatigue in the strict definition of fatigue, they decrease in their capacity to secrete the proper amount of hormones needed to compensate for the stress the body is under. It was never intended to be a scientific term; however, it has started to appear in the scientific literature.

## 3) How do we know if we have Adrenal Fatigue?

**a.** What are the common signs and symptoms? There are many signs and symptoms of adrenal fatigue, and they vary to some degree, from person to person. The most common symptoms include:

- Early morning fatigue – although the person may have slept for 8 hours or more, they are still very tired upon waking
- Difficulty getting going in the morning
- Tired for "no reason"
- Need coffee or colas to get you, and keep you going during the day
- Feeling run down and stressed
- Crave salty or sweet snacks
- Struggling to keep up with life's daily demands
- Can't bounce back from stress or illness
- Not having fun anymore

- Decreased sex drive

**b. What tests can I do at home?** There are four tests that can be done at home, that are the same tests a doctor familiar with adrenal fatigue will do in his office.

**1. Iris Contraction Test** – In a dark room, shine a pen light across (not into) your eye with a mirror in front of you. In the normal eye, the pupil will contract and hold. But in adrenal fatigue, the pupil will contract and after a few seconds start to vacillate between contraction and dilation. After 1½ - 2 minutes, the pupil will dilate even in the presence of light.

**2. Blood Pressure Test** – Lie down for approximately 5 minutes. Take your blood pressure. Then stand and immediately take your blood pressure again. The normal response is for the blood pressure to rise (both systolic and diastolic) about 10mmHg. However, in adrenal fatigue the blood pressure will actually drop by about 10mmHg or more. In some cases of milder adrenal fatigue, the blood pressure will remain the same.

**3. Sergent's White Line Test** – Lie on your back and have a friend take the blunt end of a fork or spoon and draw it across your abdomen with approximately 5kg of pressure. The normal response is for a red line to appear. With adrenal fatigue, either a white line or a white line with a red outline will appear and stay for approximately 2 minutes or longer.

**4. Rogoff's Sign Test** – Lie on your stomach. The adrenal glands can be accessed by pressing approximately one inch laterally from the spine, between the 11th and 12th ribs. Have a friend press on the adrenal glands with about 5kg of pressure. The normal response is simply a feeling of pressure. In adrenal fatigue, the adrenals will be tender to painful.

Tests 3 and 4 above are usually seen with the more severe cases of adrenal fatigue.

**c. What laboratory tests can be done to confirm Adrenal Fatigue?** Although adrenal function can be tested using serum, urine or saliva, the easiest and most reliable test for adrenal fatigue is to use a salivary hormone test. In fact, many of the adrenal hormones can be easily test-

ed with saliva. Salivary adrenal hormone tests should include: cortisol, DHEAs, progesterone, estrogen and testosterone. (Yes, the adrenals do produce a significant amount of sex hormones. In women, more than 50% of their testosterone is produced by the adrenals. Approximately 40% of estrogen and a significant amount of progesterone are produced by the adrenal glands. In men, about 40% of testosterone is secreted by the adrenal glands, and nearly all of the estrogen and progesterone.)

## 4) How common is Adrenal Fatigue?

Although there are no actual studies, Dr. John Tintera, a New York physician who specialized in low adrenal function, estimated that approximately 16% of the population suffered from moderate to severe adrenal fatigue, but approximately 67% of the population suffered from some form of adrenal fatigue during their lifetime. John Morgenthaler, author of *Smart Drugs I and Smart Drugs II*, quipingly stated, "80% of Americans suffer from adrenal fatigue and the other 20% are in denial."

## 5) Wouldn't my doctor know if I had Adrenal Fatigue?

Unfortunately, most doctors are not well-versed in low adrenal function. They still labor under the false impression that the only form of low adrenal function is Addison's disease. Addison's disease is the failure of the adrenal glands and is relatively rare, with an incidence of approximately 1 in 23,000. So, even though several cases of adrenal fatigue are seen each day in the typical clinic, they are usually overlooked or mis-diagnosed by the attending physician. Even though thousands of doctors have now learned to recognize and treat adrenal fatigue, the chance of a particular doctor being familiar with adrenal fatigue in mainstream medicine is still small.

## 6) Is Adrenal Fatigue related to any other illnesses?

Yes. Adrenal fatigue is related to many illnesses. In fact, most chronic illnesses involve some form of adrenal fatigue, whether mild, moderate or severe. This is because all chronic illness is stressful on the body, on the psyche, on the emotions. Chronic illness often causes financial strain, another significant stress. Even in many acute illnesses, adrenal fatigue plays a small to dominant role in the symptom picture and is a component of the illness.

## 7) If someone has Adrenal Fatigue, do they have it forever?

No. In fact, one of the most exciting things about the treatment of adrenal fatigue is that even though people experiencing it often feel terrible and may be severely limited in

their ability to function (I have had patients who are not even able to get out of bed or to dress themselves because their adrenal fatigue was so severe), complete recovery is possible, in fact likely with proper treatment.

### 8) What can they do to recover from Adrenal Fatigue?

I wrote the book *Adrenal Fatigue: The 21st Century Stress Syndrome* to be a comprehensive guide for treatment and recovery. In addition, I formulated four dietary supplements to be taken together as a specific protocol to help people recover from even the most severe adrenal fatigue. Following the changes in diet and lifestyle given in the book, and taking the four dietary supplements regularly, usually begins to produce noticeable results within 3-4 weeks. But, adrenal fatigue takes time to totally heal. For people with mild adrenal fatigue – 6 months; moderate – 9-12 months; severe – up to 2 years for full recovery.

### 9) Where can they go to get further information on Adrenal Fatigue?

[www.adrenalfatigue.co.nz](http://www.adrenalfatigue.co.nz) is a New Zealand website that not only has a lot of information about adrenal fatigue, but also has my self-grading adrenal fatigue questionnaire. The website is free. Anyone suspecting they have adrenal fatigue should take this easy to use questionnaire and, in just a few minutes, they will know if they have adrenal fatigue. This website also has the proper dietary supplements, including my adrenal fatigue protocol, to help people recover from adrenal fatigue.

Many of my lectures are also on YouTube. They are easily accessed by going to [youtube.com](http://youtube.com) and searching “Dr. James L. Wilson”.

In summary, adrenal fatigue is a common health condition caused by stress overtaxing the adrenal glands. Although it can severely impact one’s life and ability to function, most people with adrenal fatigue continue to struggle through each day without knowing what is wrong with them. However, by taking a simple online self-grading questionnaire and doing 4 easy tests at home, the diagnosis can usually be made. A salivary laboratory test can confirm the diagnosis. Proper treatment can usually produce full recovery. This includes following the treatment protocol in the book for diet and lifestyle changes and taking the right dietary supplements. Recovery is not only possible but probable by using this comprehensive treatment protocol.

### About the Author

Dr. James L. Wilson D.C., N.D., Ph.D. has helped thousands of people with Adrenal Fatigue regain their health and vitality during his almost 30 years of private practice. For the past 15 years he has lectured extensively to physicians and is acknowledged as an expert on hormone imbalances and their impact on health, particularly in the area of stress, immunity and adrenal function, and is a highly respected and sought after lecturer in the medical and public communities in both the USA, the England and throughout the world. Dr. Wilson is acknowledged as an expert on alternative medicine, and is the very first

person to actually have presented Adrenal Fatigue as a distinct, diagnosable syndrome; in fact he actually coined the very “Adrenal Fatigue”. His popular book, *Adrenal Fatigue: the 21st Century Stress Syndrome* (2001) is a very comprehensive yet easy to read self-help book on the diagnosis and treatment of Adrenal Fatigue.

Dr. Wilson is one of the rare few who have earned 3 doctorates and 2 master’s degrees, all from different colleges, and all in different health-related disciplines. He received his Ph.D. in Human Nutrition from the University of Arizona, with research in Cellular Immunology. His doctorates in Chiropractic and Naturopathic Medicine are from the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College and the Ontario College of Naturopathic Medicine (CCNM), respectively. Dr. Wilson is listed in *The International Who’s Who in Medicine* in Cambridge, England.

Dr. Wilson is one of the “founding fathers” of CCNM, now the largest Naturopathic College in the world. Dr. Wilson has long been on the forefront of natural medicine. With a researcher’s grasp of science and a clinician’s understanding of its human impact, Dr. Wilson has helped many thousands of physicians understand the physiology behind and treatment of various health conditions. Dr. Wilson currently resides in Tucson, Arizona, USA. Dr. Wilson’s websites of interest are [www.drwilsons.com](http://www.drwilsons.com) or the 2002 website [www.adrenalfatigue.org](http://www.adrenalfatigue.org)

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