



A guide to
**ADRENAL
RECOVERY**



DR. DONI®
NATURE EMPOWERED

**HOW TO GO FROM ADRENAL DISTRESS
TO OPTIMUM HEALTH...NATURALLY**

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A Guide to Adrenal Recovery: How to Go from Adrenal Distress to Optimum Health – Naturally

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INTRODUCTION: ADRENAL DISTRESS AND YOUR HEALTH

Adrenal stress affects us all, impacting our health, work life, and personal relationships. Stress is also at the root of virtually all illness and health disorders we experience. Thus:

**One of the best things you can do for your health and wellbeing
is to rebalance your stress response.**

When you experience stress – whether from an emotional trauma, from a physical stress (injury or illness), or from exposure to toxins or certain foods – your body undergoes what is known as the **stress response**. This response involves your brain triggering your adrenal glands to make key **stress hormones, cortisol, and adrenaline**, which lead to common symptoms associated with stress, such as a racing heart, faster breathing, and tense muscles.

For example, say your boss suddenly bursts into your office and frantically announces that you need to have all the financial statements for the department on his desk within the next hour because the company is having a surprise audit. Here's what happens inside your body:

- First, your brain will tell your adrenal glands to make more adrenaline and cortisol, kicking you into action.
- Cortisol increases your blood sugar levels, so your body will have the energy it needs to respond to the situation.
- Your body will slow down your digestion and other functions it considers not as “important” during a stressful situation.
- It will also make some shifts in your nervous system and immune system, so you are more ready to respond to the emergency.
- With all these changes going on in your body, you might, at first, feel panicky or find it difficult to think clearly.
- Gradually, as the job gets done and your feelings of urgency start to diminish, you and your body will start to relax, as your stress hormones and other bodily functions return to normal levels.

This intricate cycle is your body's "**stress response**". It is vital to remember that **this stress response is a normal, healthy process**. Even when we are at our healthiest, our stress hormones are in a continual state of flux, always adapting and shifting to address every situation. Normal periodic stress is actually an important part of our lives, and our bodies are well-designed to deal with it. We wouldn't want to eliminate stress entirely or we would become complacent and unresponsive to all that life brings us.

The problem comes when we are exposed to constant stress, over and over throughout the day, day after day. It becomes even more of an issue if we start to get stressed about feeling stressed! When you are continually stressed, your body never gets to recover and progress to the relaxation response. Therefore, while cortisol and adrenaline are helpful during a stressful situation, they can impact your health in negative ways when they are chronically present at high levels, or when they become depleted.

Cortisol, for example, has a profound effect on your entire biology. As I emphasize in my book, [*The Stress Remedy*](#), "It is hard to overstate the centrality of cortisol to our overall health" (page 40). Here's why:

- Cortisol influences your **endocrine system**, which produces all your hormones including **thyroid hormones** (which regulate metabolism), **insulin** (which regulates your **blood sugar levels**), and your **sex hormones** (estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone, which regulate sexual function, menstrual cycles, and menopause).
- It also has a profound effect on your **digestive system**. Cortisol imbalances can lead to a decrease in your ability to digest foods, disrupting the healthy bacteria living in your intestines and leading to intestinal permeability (known as leaky gut). **Leaky Gut** then becomes an internal stress for your body because the leaky intestinal lining allows undigested foods to bombard your immune system, resulting in **inflammation** that can travel from your gut, throughout your body and **nervous system**.
- When **inflammation** from the gut travels through the body, it can cause **musculoskeletal pain, fibromyalgia, skin rashes**, and many other distressing symptoms.
- Cortisol also impacts the levels of your **neurotransmitters** – brain chemicals such as serotonin, dopamine, and GABA, which influence your **mood, energy levels, mental clarity, and quality of sleep**.
- Cortisol imbalances can also have a negative effect on your **immune system**, making you more susceptible to **frequent infections** and/or **autoimmunity**, such as Hashimoto's, Celiac disease, Rheumatoid arthritis, and others.

While I've focused mainly on cortisol, our other stress hormone, **adrenaline**, plays just as big a part in these same areas. Too much or too little of it can really knock us off balance. For example, when adrenaline is

elevated, you are more likely to feel anxious and have difficulty sleeping. When adrenaline is **depleted**, you are likely to feel tired and have “brain fog”. Chronic lack of sleep, low energy, and impaired mental clarity increase our overall stress levels, creating a vicious cycle of stress in our bodies.

What many people don't know is that **long-term exposure to stress** – whether physical or mental – **can actually cause cortisol and adrenaline levels to become depleted**, which can give rise to many other health issues. This is often referred to as “**adrenal fatigue**” or “**adrenal burn-out**”. If we get to this point, our bodies (and brains) will find it difficult to cope with even small, normal daily stressors.

Because health issues develop whether cortisol and adrenaline are too high OR too low, I prefer to use the term “**adrenal distress**,” which means that your body is not able to recover from stress. Stress will also start to cause **oxidation** (also called “**oxidative stress**”), which **damages cells** in the body, skin, and brain, and ultimately causes **aging**.

As you can see, adrenal distress is a really big deal!

Adrenal distress can cause a variety of problematic health issues. Three of the most common symptom categories are:

- **ANXIETY:** Frequent worry; panic attacks; mood issues/swings; depression
- **SLEEP:** Irregular sleep patterns; disrupted sleep; wakefulness; insomnia
- **ENERGY:** Low energy; fatigue; poor memory; impaired mental concentration; “brain fog”

Of course, you could experience symptoms in more than one of these categories. Also, there isn't a set “formula” for what triggers them. Anxiety, insomnia, or low energy can occur when cortisol and/or adrenaline levels are too high OR too low.

How your symptoms appear also depends on how *your* body responds to stress. Some of that is determined, at least in part, by individual genetics. That isn't to say, however, that genes have the “final say” in what you can do about adrenal distress. In fact, I frequently ask my patients to take a DNA test so we can create a genetic health profile for them, which can guide us as to which course of action is likely to be the most effective.

In this short guide, we will look at each of the **three primary adrenal distress issues – ANXIETY, SLEEP, and ENERGY** – and look at how and why they happen. In each section, I will also suggest a few naturopathic solutions to address these issues.

Later in the book, I will also share four “universal healing strategies” that can help you avoid or reverse adrenal distress, regardless of the cause.

But first, let's get a better idea of your own stress profile. Over the next few pages, you'll find a short quiz called "Are You Suffering from Adrenal Distress?" It should only take you two or three minutes to complete. I strongly recommend doing this quiz before reading the rest of this guide, so you have a better idea of what might be your biggest underlying stress issues. Knowing your starting point is the best way to get to where you want to go:

BACK TO WELLNESS!

So, take out a pen or pencil, and let's get going.

QUIZ: ARE YOU SUFFERING FROM ADRENAL DISTRESS?

STEP ONE: Rate each statement as 1, 2, 3 or 4, using the following scale:

1. **Rarely or almost never** true (less than once a month)
2. **Occasionally** true (about once or twice a month)
3. **Frequently** true (about once a week)
4. **Always/almost always** true (more than two days a week)

STEP TWO: Then, write down the total score for each section.

PART 1 – ANXIETY	Rate 1, 2, 3, or 4
I worry or feel anxious about my life, work, health, money, or family.	
I easily get overwhelmed, irritable, and/or distressed.	
I feel anxious, emotional, jumpy, or annoyed.	
I get panic attacks or have sudden feelings of dread.	
TOTAL SCORE:	

PART 2 - SLEEP	Rate 1, 2, 3, or 4
I get LESS than 7 to 9 hours of sleep at night.	
I find it hard to FALL asleep at night.	
Once I fall asleep, I find it hard to STAY asleep at night.	

I end up staying up late at night, because I can't seem to "switch off".	
TOTAL SCORE:	

PART 3 - ENERGY	Rate 1, 2, 3, or 4
I am exhausted during the day, and would take a nap if I had the chance.	
I find it hard to think clearly, am forgetful, or get "brain fog".	
I feel tired when I wake in the morning, even if I slept well the night before.	
I get light-headed or like I might faint.	
TOTAL SCORE:	

OVERALL SCORE – copy the score from each section and tally your overall score	TOTALS
Part 1 score	
Part 2 score	
Part 3 score	
TOTAL OVERALL SCORE:	

How to interpret your OVERALL_score

4-5 points overall – Healthy stress/relaxation response: Congratulations! You are experiencing minor, manageable stress and seem to have a healthy balance of stress response and relaxation response. Use the tips in this guide to help keep you on track.

6-8 points overall – Moderate issues with stress: You are usually able to balance your stress and relaxation responses, but the balance is probably tipping a bit too far on the “stress” side. The suggestions in this guide can help you rebalance your life and support your health.

9 or more points overall – Significant issues with stress: Like so many of us, you struggle with a day that is too full of demands from others and offers too little time or support for yourself. Take heart – even 15 minutes a day can make a significant difference in how you feel, mentally, physically, and emotionally. This guide will offer suggestions to fit into even the busiest schedules, which can help you replenish your resources.

How to interpret your score in each SECTION

If you have a score of **8 or higher in any of the *individual* sections**, you are probably suffering a great deal from one or more of these key stress-related problems:

1. Anxiety
2. Sleep
3. Energy

In the following pages, we’ll examine each of these problems in turn and consider the specific reasons why these problems can be the result of adrenal distress.

Later, we’ll also look at some **natural remedies and supplements** that can help address these problems, as well as my four “universal healing remedies” for adrenal distress, so you can get your health – and your life – back on track.

ADRENAL DISTRESS PROBLEM 1: ANXIETY

The first of the three major symptoms of adrenal distress that we will look at is anxiety. When you are suffering from adrenal distress, you might feel worried all the time. You may feel nervous, even over little things. You might get panicky – or even experience full-blown panic attacks. Perhaps you feel irritable and easily “fly off the handle” at the slightest provocation. You might feel like you can never relax, compelled to stay busy all the time, because you are always thinking about what you “have to” do next.

WHY This Happens

When you get caught up in a seemingly never-ending stream of stressors, your body never gets a chance to enter the relaxation and reset phase of its normal stress response. Trying to protect you from these seeming threats to your safety, your body will hold on to that stress and keep on producing stress hormones. This can affect the production of neurotransmitters, such as serotonin and GABA – causing levels to be either too high or too low – which has a profound effect on mood. Precisely *how* stress affects hormones and neurotransmitters varies from person to person, and is determined by both your genetics and your exposure to stress over your lifetime. The good news is we can perform tests to map your genetic profile, and then we can address genetic variations with nutrients and other forms of support (discussed later in this guide).

The only way to get your body “unstuck” is to rebalance your neurotransmitter levels and support your body to escape the stress response. Neurotransmitters can be categorized as calming or stimulating. To help with anxiety, we need to ensure that you have enough calming neurotransmitters and not too many stimulating. As your stress response calms (more about this in the next section), and as you provide nutrients to increase neurotransmitters when there is a deficiency or decrease those where levels are too high, you can give your body a clear signal that the stress is gone and it is time to recover – and relax.

Natural SOLUTIONS

Many natural supplements can be used to relieve symptoms of anxiety, whether caused by adrenal distress or something else. Below are some options you might wish to try. I carry many of these products in my online shop (just click the links if you want to read more about them).

KINDLY NOTE: Some of the products mentioned in this and the following two chapters **may not be available** at health food shops or from natural supplement suppliers, as the manufacturers require them to be sold only through a licensed health care provider. Check with your naturopathic doctor to see if they carry them, or you can always find them on my online shop at <https://www.drdonistore.com/>. If you cannot find the product you need, please do not hesitate to contact me via the contact form on my website: <https://doctordoni.com/contact/>

- [Magnesium](#) is often depleted when we are exposed to high amounts of stress. Taking magnesium supplements, especially in the form of magnesium glycinate or threonate (versus citrate and oxide) can help calm your nervous system by aiding in processing adrenaline and relaxing your muscles. I often recommend a product called [Magnesium Plus](#), which contains both magnesium and vitamin B6.
- [Vitamin B6](#) (also known as P5P in the active form) can also be calming because it helps your body to process (and reduce excess amounts of) adrenaline and to support serotonin levels. Again, I recommend the product [Magnesium Plus](#), which contains both magnesium and vitamin B6.
- [Theanine](#) supports levels of GABA, a calming neurotransmitter in the body, helping with mood, focus, memory, and relaxation.
- [GABA](#) is a neurotransmitter that can be taken as a supplement. When you are healthy, it is not well absorbed into the nervous system, but when the blood-brain barrier is leaky (due to inflammation and stress), then GABA can be absorbed and help calm anxiety. Another way it can calm the nervous system is by interacting with bacteria in your digestive tract. It's best to try it and see how well it works for you. There are also supplements that [combine GABA with theanine](#) for greater effectiveness.
- [5HTP](#) (5-hydroxy tryptophan) is the precursor nutrient your body uses to make serotonin, a calming neurotransmitter that influences mood as well as sleep and motivation. *(NOTE: It is important to work with a naturopathic doctor when taking 5HTP, if you are also taking a psychotropic medication such as an SSRI or SNRI).*

These supplements can help **decrease inflammation and oxidative stress** in the nervous system:

- [CoQ10](#) is an anti-oxidant used to protect healthy cells, and to create energy inside the cells themselves.
- [N-Acetyl Cysteine \(NAC\)](#) is a precursor nutrient used in the body to make glutathione, one of our body's main anti-oxidants.
- [Curcumin](#), from the herb turmeric, is known to decrease inflammation, including in the nervous system, and to help with anxiety.

In addition to the above, there are many **herbs that are calming to the nervous system**, including:

- Chamomile (such as a tea)

- [Lavender](#) (essential oil or [capsule form](#))
- [Hops](#) (or “humulus”), an ingredient in beer, is calming to the nervous system. It is often used in combination products (*see below*).
- [Passion flower](#) (or “passiflora”) has a gentle calming effect on the nervous system. It is often used in combination products (*see below*).

There are also several good combination formulas that include the nutrients mentioned above, along with herbs. Some of my favorites are:

- [Stress Factors](#): A vegetarian capsule containing Vitamin B6, Theanine, hops, passion flower, inositol, GABA and 5-HTP.
- [Calm G](#): Contains Theanine, N-Acetyl Cysteine, CoQ10 and other ingredients, all of which have a calming effect on the nervous system by helping moderate over-stimulation of neurotransmitters.
- [Dr. Doni’s Calming Support](#): Contains niacin (B3), B6, B5, GABA and glycine all of which help your body process stress and support the calming part of your nervous system.
- [Dr. Doni’s Stress support](#): Contains vitamin C, B1, B2, B5, B6, B12, magnesium and theanine to support your body to break down adrenaline and move it out of your body, and to calm your nervous system overall.



ADRENAL DISTRESS PROBLEM 2: SLEEP

Poor or irregular sleep is one of the most troublesome symptoms – and most obvious indicators – of adrenal distress. You might have difficulty falling asleep at night, or you might find yourself waking up during the night. Once awake, you might have a hard time getting back to sleep. Alternatively, you might be waking up too early in the morning. Any of these things can leave you feeling tired upon waking in the morning.

WHY This Happens

Generally speaking, optimal cortisol levels should be highest in the morning when you wake, to give you energy to face the day. Then, these gradually reduce as the day progresses, until they reach their lowest point at bedtime, so you can fall asleep more easily. But if your cortisol levels are too low in the morning, you are likely to feel low in energy throughout the day. Conversely, if your cortisol OR adrenal levels are too high at night, you will have difficulty “switching off”. We can measure your cortisol levels in blood, saliva, or urine to find out exactly what’s happening in your body at this point in time (more about that below).

To understand the reason why your stress hormone levels might be high at night, we need to go back to what we discussed in the introduction to this book. Throughout the day, your body constantly responds and adapts to stresses in your environment. If stressors are too strong, too frequent, or even constant, your cortisol and/or adrenaline levels may “get stuck”, i.e. remain at elevated levels for a prolonged period of time. Sometimes, these levels will still be elevated just when your body needs them to be at their *lowest* – at bedtime. If your stress hormones are too high at night, sleep problems are inevitable.

Eventually, **melatonin** levels may also become depleted. Melatonin is the hormone that reaches its highest levels after 10 PM and supports sleep, as well as the repair processes that occur during sleep. Stress and exposure to light at night both decrease the production of melatonin.

Natural SOLUTIONS

If you suffer from insomnia or disrupted sleep, I urge you not to be tempted to use sedatives or alcohol as “sleep aids”. In the long term, these will only make your problems worse, and possibly cause other health issues. If you feel you would like to try some sort of supplement to help with your sleep issues, I recommend trying some natural supplements that can help rebalance your stress hormones, to help you fall asleep naturally.

There are many nutrients and herbs that can help **decrease cortisol**, such as:

- [Phosphatidyl Serine](#) and [Banaba leaf](#), which can be found in a combination product called [Calm CP](#).

- [Magnolia root](#) and [Ziziphus](#), which can be found in a combination product called [SeditolPlus](#).

In addition to the nutrients and herbs listed in the “anxiety” section of this guide, here are some herbs to help **lower adrenaline levels** and **help with sleep**:

- Valerian root
- California poppy
- Lemon Balm

It helps to ensure your bedroom is dark, so that your body gets the signal to produce adequate **melatonin**. You may also need to use blue-light blocking glasses and filters on your electronic devices, if you are exposed to lights after 10 pm.

If you want to find out whether melatonin is an issue for you, melatonin levels can be tested in saliva or urine. If the test shows that your levels are low, you can support the production of melatonin with 5HTP, vitamin B5, and B6, or alternatively by taking a supplement that actually contains melatonin.

There are a number of products available that combine nutrients, herbs, and melatonin, which can create an overall calming effect of your mind and body, so you can sleep more easily.

- [Kavinace Ultra PM](#): Includes phenylbutyric acid, a precursor of GABA, 5HTP, and melatonin, to help calm your mind and promote sleep.
- [SleepAide](#): Contains several calming herbs (including valerian and California poppy), as well as theanine and melatonin.
- [Dr. Doni’s Sleep Support](#): Contains vitamin B6, chamomile, valerian, passion flower, lemon balm, GABA, theanine, 5HTP and melatonin, all to help calm your nervous system and help you to sleep better so you can recover from stress and heal your adrenal glands.



There are many other “no cost” ways to improve your sleep, all of which involve simple changes to your lifestyle and daily routine. We’ll look at these later in this guide when I discuss my four “universal healing remedies” for adrenal distress.

ADRENAL DISTRESS PROBLEM 3: ENERGY

Low energy is another common symptom – and indicator – of adrenal distress. When your adrenals function poorly, you feel exhausted and fatigued all the time. You don't feel like getting out of bed in the morning, and you probably struggle throughout the day. You might find yourself at work wishing you could just take a nap during the day.

Energy issues can also impair mental functions. You might find yourself unable to concentrate, or that you cannot remember things the way you used to. Some people with adrenal distress describe these frustrating experiences as “brain fog”.

WHY This Happens

You'll probably think I sound like a broken record by now, but it really is all down to stress. At some point – and this part varies for each person – your adrenal glands will become depleted, unable to produce even enough cortisol and adrenaline to support you through daily activities. In a nutshell, cortisol and adrenaline are stimulating hormones. They wake you up. They give you energy. So, if you don't have enough of them, you feel tired. It really is that simple.

I should point out that stress-related dysfunction of adrenal and cortisol is **different from Addison's disease and Cushing Syndrome**, which is when your adrenals have *stopped working* altogether. When a patient is diagnosed with Addison's disease, the only option is cortisol replacement therapy. But with adrenal distress, your adrenal glands *can* recover. They just need a chance to recover from all the stress, with the support of natural supplements.

Natural SOLUTIONS

As tired as you might be, before jumping in to support your energy levels, be sure that you have enough calming support around first. So even if you scored highest on problem 3, I encourage you to check in with yourself and see if you need some calming as well. Often when cortisol and/or adrenaline are depleted, we are also depleted in the calming neurotransmitters. It is going to work out better if you first get started with calming your nervous system, and then add in support for your energy and adrenal function.

There are many nutrients, herbs, and/or glandulars (for temporary use only) we can use to help the adrenal glands recover and start working effectively again:

- **Vitamins and amino acids:** Vitamin C, B vitamins (especially pantothenic acid), and magnesium all help. Tyrosine is the precursor nutrient to make more adrenaline. All these vitamins are used by the adrenal glands to make cortisol and adrenaline.

- **Adaptogenic herbs:** Such as rhodiola, Siberian ginseng, licorice, holy basil, Schizandra berry, ashwaganda, and mushroom extracts (Reishi and Cordyceps, for example). Adaptogens support the adrenal glands to make more adrenaline and cortisol, so they can rebalance your body’s stress response. **NOTE that if you have high blood pressure,** it is important that you are under the care of a physician and that you monitor your blood pressure while taking any of these herbs. Licorice in particular can increase blood pressure levels.

You can choose to use these products individually, or you might wish to try products that contain a **combination of these nutrients and herbs.** Here are a few I recommend to my own patients:

- **Adrenal Response:** A combination of vitamin C, pantothenate, magnesium, ashwagandha, L-serine, rhodiola extract, holy basil (tulsi) leaf, Cordyceps mushroom mycelia, Reishi mushroom, organic astragalus root, Schizandra, and other active ingredients.
- **AdreneVive:** A combination of ashwagandha root extract, skullcap root extract, Siberian ginseng, rhodiola, L-theanine, and phosphatidylserine.
- **Adrenal SAP licorice-free:** A combination of vitamins C, B6 and B5, plus magnesium, zinc, ashwagandha, holy basil (tulsi), Panax ginseng, Siberian ginseng, Schizandra, and astragalus.
- **Dr. Doni’s Adrenal Support:** A combination of vitamin C, B5 (pantothenic acid), B2, B6, eleutherococcus (Siberian ginseng), Panax ginseng, ashwagandha, rhodiola, tyrosine, and licorice (glycyrrhiza). All these ingredients support the adrenal glands to heal from adrenal distress, and to make more cortisol and adrenaline.



In addition to the above, getting proper rest, having regular meals, and other things that attend to your self-care will help as well. We will look more at these when we discuss my “four universal healing remedies” later in this guide.

FOUR “UNIVERSAL” HEALING REMEDIES FOR ADRENAL DISTRESS

Regardless of any other remedies you may decide to use to address your specific adrenal distress situation, I believe everyone can benefit from implementing what I call the four “universal” healing strategies for adrenal distress, which can be remembered by the acronym “**CARE**”:

C = CLEAN EATING

A = ADEQUATE SLEEP

R = REDUCE STRESS

E = EXERCISE

The simple strategies in this **CARE** formula can help you recover from adrenal distress, and prevent it from recurring in the future.

In the next few pages, we’ll look at each of these in turn.

UNIVERSAL HEALING REMEDY #1: CLEAN EATING

“Clean eating” refers to eating in ways that are **least stressful** and **most supportive** of your adrenals, and indeed your entire body. It is not just about WHAT you eat, but also about HOW and WHEN you eat. The most effective, clinically proven approach to clean eating is to nourish yourself with **four to six small "half-meals" spread evenly throughout each day**. Ideally, each of these small meals should contain a balance of:

- Proteins (30-40%)
- Carbohydrates (30-40% *or less*)
- Healthy fats (20-30% *or more*).

SIDE NOTE: If you're unsure how to achieve this balance, in my [Stress Remedy Programs](#) I offer meal plans outlining how to fit 4-6 half-meals easily into your day (and still have a life!). You can check out the [7-day and 21-day options](#) on my website.

It is also important to eliminate reactive foods that *trigger* your stress response. Reactive foods cause unhealthy inflammation in your body. You may not experience an obvious allergic reaction or sensitivity to them, but these foods can quickly sap your energy and degrade your health. Food sensitivities occur due to an unhealthy intestinal lining caused by stress, a condition called **leaky gut**, which can heal once you eliminate the harmful foods from your diet and start taking supplements to heal leaky gut, while optimizing your stress response.

For those suffering from chronic conditions, or those who wish to know exactly which foods cause a reaction in their bodies, I recommend doing an **IgA and IgG delayed food sensitivity panel**. This panel will check for both IgG and IgA antibodies to 96 of the most common foods, including gluten and dairy products. It is a blood test completed with a finger prick, which you can do at home. It can tell you exactly which foods are causing stress in your body, so you know which foods to avoid. You can do these tests through your naturopathic doctor. You can also [order the home tests](#) (with or without a consultation) [from my online shop](#).

If you are unable to complete a food sensitivity panel (or you have ordered the tests, but don't yet have your results), you could choose to **follow an elimination diet** and avoid the foods most likely to increase stress in your body. For patients suffering from adrenal stress (or anyone living a stressful lifestyle), it is best to avoid the following five foods:

1. Gluten
2. Dairy
3. Processed sugar
4. Eggs
5. Soy

By eliminating these foods for a period of time (perhaps 6-8 weeks, or even up to a year), you allow your body to reset itself and heal your intestinal lining. You may be able to enjoy these foods again (in moderation) once you've rebalanced your stress response.

Healing Leaky Gut

If you have been diagnosed with leaky gut, adopting a “clean eating” regime might require some additional help to support your efforts. Here are some suggested products I have developed:

[Dr. Doni's Leaky Gut Support](#)

Because so many of my patients come to me with leaky gut issues, I developed this bespoke product, which is a combination of deglycerized licorice (that doesn't affect blood pressure), glutamine, arabinogalactan (an extract from the North American larch tree), and aloe vera leaf.



[Dr. Doni's Enzyme Support](#)

Because supporting digestion of food is essential for healing leaky gut, I created this product containing plant-based pancreatic enzymes to help your body digest carbohydrates, proteins and fats. This helps resolve digestive problems, heal leaky gut, and reduces your body's negative reaction to certain foods.



[21-day Stress Remedy Program](#)

This program includes my Enzyme Support, Leaky Gut Support, as well as my Stress Remedy Pea Protein shake, a detailed guidebook, recipes, shopping list, daily email tips and access to my private Facebook group.



For patients who are really struggling with digestive issues, or who prefer professional support, I also offer a [6-month naturopathic Leaky Gut and Digestive Solutions Package](#), which include the food sensitivity panel, consultations, a 10% discount on all supplements, and many other benefits. If you feel you need this level of support, you can [learn more here](#).

If you're not sure whether you have leaky gut, or you are simply curious to learn more about it, you can find a wealth of information about it in my **15-part blog series on leaky gut** at <https://doctordoni.com/tag/leaky-gut-series/>.

UNIVERSAL HEALING REMEDY #2: ADEQUATE SLEEP

We all need sleep – even more so when we’re facing adrenal distress. Without adequate sleep (between 7.5 and 9 hours every night), your body and mind won’t be able to handle even small stressors without malfunctioning, and it will find it difficult to defend itself against illness and chronic health conditions. In fact, long-term sleeplessness and chronic exhaustion can cause a host of serious health issues including **heart disease, neurological disorders, and unwanted weight gain.**

Unfortunately, it’s easy to feel caught in a “Catch 22” situation here. Sleep is a “universal remedy” for adrenal distress, but poor sleep is also CAUSED by adrenal distress! So, what exactly CAN you do to restore sleep when your adrenals are functioning poorly, so they can start to rebalance themselves?

First, you need to **create a routine** that allows you to send a clear message to your mind and body that it is time to relax and sleep. Elements of that routine are as follows:

- Try to go to bed around the same time every night (and get up around the same time every morning).
- Turn off all electronic devices 1-2 hours before bed. This includes TVs, computers, tablets and smartphones. I know it might seem hard, but the electrical fields from these devices can make it difficult for your brain to “power down” for the night.
- Make sure your bedroom is DARK. Darkness stimulates melatonin production. Melatonin is one of your body’s natural sedatives.
- Make sure your bedroom is QUIET.
- Don’t drink water within 1 to 2 hours of bedtime, so you aren’t woken up in the night with trips to the bathroom.
- Don’t eat sugar within 1 to 2 hours of bedtime, as it could cause your blood sugar levels to spike and then drop, waking you up.

I also recommend getting 15-30 minutes of exercise 3-5 times a week (see the section on exercise later in this book) and making sure your body is properly hydrated throughout the day. Dehydration actually *aggravates* your stress response. A good rule of thumb is to ensure you **drink half your body weight in ounces of water per day** (but make sure you don’t drink too close to bedtime, as mentioned above).

If you have a lot on your mind, you might also wish to spend 15-30 minutes journaling before bed. This can help you release pent-up worries and get organized for the next day.

If, after all these strategies, you still struggle to get a good night's rest, a visit to your naturopathic doctor or integrative practitioner is a must. Sleep is such a common (and serious) health issue that I offer a special ["Natural Sleep Solutions"](#) package to help my patients rebalance and restore their sleep patterns. If you're curious, you can [read about this package on my website](#).

I have also written a book JUST about sleep called [*INSOMNIA: A Natural Guide to Better Sleep*](#).

However you choose to address your adrenal distress issues, please take sleep very seriously. **Getting enough good quality sleep is the MOST important thing you can do to rebalance your stress response.**

UNIVERSAL HEALING REMEDY #3: REDUCE STRESS

As we've discussed, **stress** can lead to adrenal distress, which in turn can lead to other troublesome health concerns. A plethora of research has determined that elevated stress levels have a direct impact on depression and anxiety, as they disrupt the balance of your neurotransmitters, the bio-chemicals that determine mood. Once you get stuck in this vicious stress cycle, sleep, energy, and mental focus will also inevitably suffer.

That's why one of the best things you can do to help restore balance to your adrenals is to **REDUCE STRESS** in your life. If you are very stressed right now, you might think, "That's easier said than done, Dr. Doni!" But I assure you that there are many simple, no-cost ways to introduce stress-reducing habits into your life, which can help restore your adrenal balance and overall wellness.

My top five stress-busting strategies are:

1. Connecting with self
2. Connecting with others
3. Enjoying nature
4. Experiencing emotion
5. Curling up with a good book – and some chocolate!

Connect with Self

In our modern "go-go-go" world, it's so easy to allow work or other obligations to become the main priority in our lives. Unfortunately, this can come at a great cost: we can end up feeling disconnected from *ourselves*. You might never have considered this before, but **feelings of disconnection from self is one of the greatest stressors we humans can possibly experience.**

For this reason, one of the most healing things you can do for yourself is to **develop a habit** of making time to reconnect with yourself. Some excellent ways to do this include **yoga, meditation, and massage therapy.**

Many studies have shown that such practices can help reduce stress, improve sleep quality, and help stabilize your heart rate. In some studies,^{1, 2} people have reported their stress significantly decreased and their mood improved after they participated in regular yoga classes. Other studies^{3, 4} have shown that daily mindfulness practices, such as meditation, help reset the stress response, decrease cortisol levels, and can actually change how your genes respond to stress. Massage⁵ can rebalance your stress response by decreasing cortisol, while increasing serotonin and dopamine. Serotonin is a neurotransmitter that helps

create serenity, optimism, and self-confidence, while dopamine is associated with motivation, excitement, and pleasure.

Connect with Others

Connecting with others is just as important to your health as connecting with yourself. Whether physically or emotionally, connecting with others has been shown to increase oxytocin, a stress-reducing hormone related to bonding. Likewise, research shows that talking with a loved one can decrease cortisol, increase endorphins and oxytocin, relax muscles, and improve mood.

As the mother of a young girl, I was fascinated by an article in *Scientific American*⁶ that reported on a study in which young girls were given stressful tasks. Some of these girls were then allowed to call their mothers, while others were not. **The girls who talked with Mom showed decreased blood levels of cortisol** and increased levels of oxytocin. Girls who hugged their mothers in person had a similar response.

And remember: “others” does not just refer to human beings. Numerous studies^{7, 8, 9} have shown that **spending quality time with a favorite dog or cat** also has a positive effect on levels of cortisol, endorphins, and oxytocin, as well as relaxing muscles and improving mood.

Enjoy Nature

Getting out into nature, whether for a bike ride, some cross-country skiing, a leisurely stroll, or simply to sit quietly in the sunlight, has been known to lower stress and bring all your body’s core systems back into balance. **Even looking at artwork of natural scenes** has been shown to balance the stress response¹⁵. Research suggests that nature has restorative properties that support the calming part of our nervous system. So spending time in a “greenspace” – even looking out a window – can buffer the effects of stress.

Numerous studies^{10, 11} have shown that gardening, caring for plants (referred to as horticultural therapy), and enjoying nature are all ways to lessen stress, decrease cortisol, boost endorphins and oxytocin, relax muscles, and improve mood and focus. One study conducted in the Netherlands¹² revealed that gardening could help boost mood – and even lower cortisol – among people who had just finished a stressful task.

The same goes for taking a walk. Recent studies in urban planning^{13, 14} confirmed that taking a walk in a park (versus walking in a city) for even 15 minutes resulted in both reduced stress and improved mood. Even the Alzheimer’s Society promotes “memory walks”, as studies have shown that regular walking helps improve memory.

Experience Emotion

An extraordinarily effective way to rebalance your stress response and prevent adrenal stress is to allow yourself to experience emotion. This is because **emotions stimulate the hormones and neurotransmitters that lower stress in your body.**

Laughter, for example, is a powerful stress reliever. Studies conducted as early as 1989¹⁶ have shown that laughter can help reduce cortisol levels, while also raising your endorphins and oxytocin. This results in your muscles relaxing and an overall improvement in mood.

But even expressing “negative” emotions – such sadness, frustration, or anger – can be healing, especially if they are shared. In one study¹⁷ a group of female students were asked to share their emotions about a stressful task they were assigned. One group of students received no emotional response from the people with whom they had shared their feelings. The other group received an empathic response from the people to whom they had spoken. Those who had received empathy felt less stressful as a result of expressing their negative emotions, simply **because they felt they had been heard and understood.** While many people might find it hard to share negative emotions with others, this shows that “bottling up” those feelings can be bad for your health!

Writing in a journal is another terrific way to avoid adrenal stress and balance your stress response. A study published in *Psychotherapy Research*¹⁸ found that people in therapy who wrote about their emotions had less anxiety and fewer symptoms of depression than a control group of patients who did no writing. The journal-writers also made better progress in therapy.

Curl Up with a Good Book – and Some Chocolate!

According to Dr Lewis at the University of Sussex, England, "Losing yourself in a book is the ultimate relaxation." In a 2009 study he carried out¹⁹, the heart rates and stress levels of a group of volunteers were tested before and during a variety of relaxation methods, including talking a walk, having a cup of tea/coffee, and reading a book. Of these, reading was most effective: **just six minutes of reading reduced stress levels by an impressive 68%.**

And here's some news you will really like: A recent study reported²⁰ there is a link between the consumption of **one ounce of chocolate each day for two weeks with decreased levels of cortisol.** So, taking some time out every day to curl up with a good book while savoring a square of chocolate is actually a perfect way to reduce stress! Remember, though, that many chocolates contain sugar and lots of calories, so be sure to eat it in moderation, and always choose dark chocolate for the added dairy-free, lower-sugar, antioxidant benefits. You can find some [delicious examples of 70% dark chocolate](#) in my online shop.

UNIVERSAL HEALING REMEDY #4: EXERCISE

One of the most effective ways to combat stress is to exercise regularly. That said, when you are suffering from adrenal distress, trying to exercise too much or too strenuously can do more harm than good. Also, it's important to remember that there is no single "right" type or amount of exercise for all people. One of the most important things I have learned in working with patients over the years is that effective exercise *must* be tailored according to the abilities, tastes, and lifestyle of each individual.

It is always important to **exercise at your current level**. Even if you used to be a marathon runner, if you haven't exercised in a while, **start with five minutes a day**. Start small, perhaps with some gentle stretching movements. Later, you can add some core muscle exercises (see below). Your *brain* might tell you that you "should" do more, but that might be what your *body* needs. When your adrenal glands are stressed, you cannot expect to perform the same way as when you were healthy.

If you feel tired or in pain after exercising, your body is telling you that you did too much. If you experience any kind of pain, tiredness, or weakness after exercising, **do less next time**. Remember, also, that you might not feel the pain until the day *after* you exercised, so be vigilant about listening to your body. It is better to do less and feel good afterward than to push yourself and need a week to recover.

An important part of exercising is to **strengthen the deep inner core muscles** in the body's upper and lower torso. Although you can't see the inner core muscles even when they're in perfect shape, they are crucial to your health, energy, and flexibility. They stabilize the body, keep your posture upright, and protect many of your organs. Ultimately, your core muscles are engaged in every movement you make, and should be the cornerstone of any exercise regimen.

Stress-free Core Muscle Exercises

Here's an easy, stress-free way to start engaging your inner core muscles:

- Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet on the floor.
- Press your lower back into the floor and hold for four seconds, then release.
- Repeat this several times, according to your capability. You may then gradually hold the position for longer amounts of time (up to 30 seconds).

Here's another option for strengthening core muscles:

- Get on your hands and knees, with your back flat and parallel to the floor.
- Pull in your belly button toward your spine and hold for four seconds, and release. Remember to breathe with these movements.

- Repeat this several times, according to your capability. You may then gradually hold the position for longer amounts of time (up to 30 seconds).

These simple movements prepare your body for other aspects of your exercise routine, and they are the perfect way to start exercising if you're out of practice.

As You Start to Build Back Your Strength

Once you feel your strength and endurance start to improve, you can add other types of exercises that can help make your body stronger and more resistant to future problems with adrenal distress. [On pages 198 – 200 of my book *The Stress Remedy*](#), I detail four different stress-reducing exercise regimes you might want to try. But again, I don't recommend launching right into these until you have started to rebuild your stamina and addressed your adrenal issues.

Finally, always remember to make your regime work *for you*. **Choose a type of exercise you enjoy and that fits easily into your schedule.** Otherwise, you'll just be putting yourself back on the "stress treadmill" by demanding too much of your body.

LIVING IN TOTAL WELLNESS – TODAY AND EVERY DAY

If you suffer from adrenal distress – especially if you have been struggling with it for a long time – getting back to a state of balance can seem like an unattainable dream. But based on my almost 20 years of experience as a naturopathic doctor helping patients with adrenal distress, I can assure you that it *is* possible not only to get over your troublesome symptoms, but to come back to a state of total *wellness* – full of health, vitality, energy, and joy.

Of course, if you are currently very stressed, knowing where to start with all the information provided in this guide can be daunting, or even overwhelming. To make it easy for you, I invite you to plan your journey back to health using a “tiered” approach, as follows.

TIER 1: SUPPLEMENTS

First, take the quiz at the beginning of this book to determine the *most* troublesome symptoms of adrenal distress you currently face: sleep, energy, or anxiety/mood. Then, refer to the section in this guide that discusses that specific issue. Read about the natural supplements recommended for that issue and choose one (or, at most, two) that you’d like to try out. Don’t experiment with *too* many supplements at once; I find it works best to get a sense of how your body responds to each product before adding another. Adding one at a time also allows you to adjust the dose until you see some benefit or can evaluate the effectiveness of the product for you. Bear in mind that, unlike harsh prescription drugs, it may take several weeks before you start to see any noticeable effects from natural supplements. If you want to introduce another supplement into your healing regime, you can do so a few weeks later.

TIER 2: IMPLEMENT THE “STRESS REMEDY”

I strongly believe in the effectiveness of what I call “The Stress Remedy”. There are two parts to the Stress Remedy. First, sign up for one of my [“Stress Remedy Programs”](#), which are 7-day and 21-day packages that combine of supplements, recipes, and written support for people with stress-related health issues.

For an effective adrenal recovery, it’s crucial to introduce the “CARE” universal healing strategies into your daily routine. I support you to introduce these in the daily email tips that come with the 7- and 21-day programs. But remember: these could be major *lifestyle* changes for you, so don’t stress yourself out by trying to introduce them into your life all at once. Start with “C” (“clean eating”), before you try anything else. After a few weeks, if you feel you have gotten into the *habit* of clean eating, move on to “A” (“adequate sleep”), especially if sleep was one of our troublesome issues. Once you have changed some of your sleeping habits, you can start to think about ways to bring “R” (“reduce stress”) into your life by making time for

stress-reducing activities in your daily routine. After you have made these lifestyle changes, “E” (“exercise”) becomes easier and more effective.

TIER 3: GET YOUR STRESS HORMONE LEVELS CHECKED

If you suffer from extreme symptoms of adrenal distress (what many people call “adrenal fatigue” or “burn-out”), **OR** your troublesome symptoms have been going on for a long time, it might be helpful to have your stress hormone levels checked to determine some of the underlying *causes* of your adrenal imbalances. The health panels I routinely suggest to my patients include:

- **Cortisol:** a timed urine or saliva test collected morning, mid-day, evening, and bedtime, so we can see the cortisol curve (or if cortisol is too high or too low at any particular time of day).
- **Adrenaline:** a urine test to measure epinephrine and norepinephrine levels.
- **Neurotransmitters:** a urine test that measures levels of several neurotransmitters, including serotonin, dopamine, GABA, and glutamate.
- **[Food sensitivities \(IgA and IgG\) panel:](#)** a blood test completed with a finger prick, which you can do at home. See previous section on “Clean Eating” for more details.
- **Blood sugar test:** a blood test of glucose and hemoglobin A1c, to measure your average blood sugar level over three months.

Many of these are available for purchase for home testing, or you can ask your doctor to order them for you. In my own practice, I make these tests available to any patient who wishes to take them, and I include them as standard in many of [my naturopathic treatment packages](#).

TIER 4: WORK WITH A NATUROPATHIC DOCTOR

Of course, getting your levels checked is only useful if you know what to DO with the information the tests reveal. If you feel you need the support of a health professional, I strongly recommend working with a naturopathic doctor who can use your test results to formulate an individualized approach to address the root cause(s) of your adrenal imbalances, making it less likely adrenal distress will come back into your life in the future.

If you feel you need this level of support but you don’t already have a naturopathic doctor, I invite you to read about [my range of specialized treatment packages](#). My [‘Adrenal Recovery and Wellness Package’](#) may be of particular interest if you know you have adrenal issues, or suspect you may have adrenal distress based

on your symptoms. This 6-month program is designed not only to help you recover from adrenal distress, but to STAY healthier and more resilient in the long term.

Finally, I want to take a stand and say that this “tiered” approach will not only help you avoid serious health issues, but also the need for prescription medications that can cause serious side effects that may actually *worsen* your symptoms. That is why, if you are really struggling, the very best solution is to work with a good naturopathic doctor who can provide you with answers and one-on-one support.

I hope this little guide has made it easier for you to determine the practical steps you need to take so you can restore your adrenal balance and attain a state of total wellness – now and for the rest of your life.

If you want to learn even more about my “Stress Remedy” approach to natural holistic health, I recommend picking up a copy of my book [*The Stress Remedy: Master Your Body’s Synergy and Optimize Your Health*](#). This book will give you even more information on how and why we experience stress, and its impact on your health and wellbeing. It also gives detailed instructions on how to reclaim your health, including my “Stress Remedy Master Plan”, a recommended meal plan, and dozens of stress-reducing recipes.

Then, you can take out your dark chocolate and “curl up with a good book” – and get started on your healing journey.

Wellness wishes to you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr. Doni". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with large, rounded letters.

BOOKS, SUPPLEMENTS AND PROGRAMS BY DR. DONI WILSON

 <p>Contains 50 pages of recipes – all gluten, egg, dairy, and soy FREE. Over 300 pages long.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>The Stress Remedy:</i></u> <u><i>Master Your Body's Synergy and Optimize Your Health</i></u></p> <p>The award-winning, definitive guide to Dr. Doni Wilson's naturopathic approach to health. Find out the science behind all illness, and the practical steps to achieve lifelong wellness.</p>		<p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Insomnia: A Natural Guide to Better Sleep</i></u></p> <p>In this book, Dr. Doni Wilson shares easy-to-understand explanations – and natural solutions – for 12 of the most common factors that contribute to sleeplessness and wakefulness at night. Discover the science behind sleeplessness, and how to fall asleep, stay asleep, restore health, and regain your sanity without medication.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Dr. Doni's Stress Remedy Programs</u></p>  <p>7-day and 21-day programs designed to help you reset old eating habits, balance blood sugar, heal digestive issues, reduce inflammation, assist you with healthy weight loss, and free your body from toxins and stress.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>UNIQUE Products Designed By Dr. Doni</u></p>  <p>Find EXACTLY what you need in this range of natural supplements designed by Dr. Doni herself. 100% quality and freshness guaranteed. Free shipping on orders over \$99.</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Dr. Doni's Natural Sleep Solutions</u></p>  <p>A 6-month naturopathic treatment package for patients whose lives are negatively affected because they cannot fall asleep and/or stay asleep at night and are seeking a natural sleep remedies and solutions.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Dr. Doni's Leaky Gut Solutions</u></p>  <p>A 6-month naturopathic treatment package for patients diagnosed with leaky gut, or who are experiencing symptoms that may be caused by leaky gut and seeking natural remedies and solutions for digestive health.</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Autoimmunity Solutions Package</u></p>  <p>A 6-month naturopathic treatment package for patients suffering from symptoms of autoimmunity, such as fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue, rheumatoid arthritis, Hashimoto's, MS, lupus, chemical sensitivities, weakness, brain fog, dementia, neuro-generation, etc.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Dr. Doni's Adrenal Recovery & Wellness Package</u></p>  <p>A 6-month naturopathic treatment package for patients suffering from symptoms of adrenal distress and cortisol issues, such as chronic fatigue, sleep issues, chronic pain, mood issues, chronic illness, allergies, etc.</p>		

ABOUT DR. DONI WILSON



Dr. Donielle (Doni) Wilson is a nationally celebrated naturopathic doctor, certified professional midwife (CPM), doula and nutrition specialist, who is dedicated to maximizing the health of women, men and children, through natural approaches. She has a doctorate in naturopathic medicine from Bastyr University, as well as a bachelor's degree in nutrition and a bachelor's in science from Oregon State University. She is also the author of the book [*The Stress Remedy: Master Your Body's Synergy and Optimize Your Health*](#), in which she explains how and why we experience stress, how it impacts our health and wellbeing, and how we can reclaim our health naturally. She is also the creator of the [*Stress Remedy 7-Day and 21-Day Programs*](#) – popular nutritional regimes that reduces inflammation, heals digestion, supports detoxification, and brings the body back to a state of optimal health.

Dr. Doni started her career in a naturopathic clinic helping patients with environmental and food allergies. There, she created a specialized approach to food intolerances and “eating for health.” She then established started her own naturopathic practice in 2001.

Deeply dedicated to addressing ailments related to stress, Dr. Doni went on to develop a methodology that examines how stress impacts each individual differently. Through this approach, she devised a variety of treatments for stress- related illnesses that include utilizing nutrients and herbs to balance hormone and neurotransmitter levels. Her approaches make life-changing differences in health conditions such as depression, anxiety, PMDD, insomnia, and more. She also helps women with hormone imbalances, menstrual irregularities, cervical dysplasia, difficulty conceiving, and recurrent infections.

Widely renowned in her field, Dr. Doni was awarded the NYANP Naturopathic Doctor of the Year award in 2004. She has served as the president and executive director of the New York Association of Naturopathic Physicians (NYANP), and is a member of the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians (AANP), Connecticut Naturopathic Physicians Association (CNPA), American Association of Naturopathic Midwives (AANM), Pediatric Association of Naturopathic Physicians (PEDANP) and Association for the Advancement of Restorative Medicine (AARM). She is regularly called upon to discuss naturopathic medicine in the media and has recently appeared in *Natural Solutions Magazine*, *First for Women Magazine*, *Huffington Post*, *Elle Magazine*, *Inspiyr Magazine*, *Mind Body Green*, *Energy Times*, and *Fox News*.

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Appointments available in person and/or via HIPAA compliant video/phone call.



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