

5 habits to lower your cortisol levels and reduce stress

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Start by implementing one or two habits. (Source: Freepik)

Ever feel like you're running on empty before the day even begins? Chronic stress can wreak havoc on your well-being, leaving you feeling frazzled and depleted. But what if there were simple ways to combat this daily struggle, setting yourself up **for a calmer, more focused day?**

For the uninitiated, these feelings are brought about by the hormone cortisol. A glucocorticoid hormone, often referred to as a stress hormone, produced and released by the adrenal glands, cortisol's levels are highest in the early morning, peaking around 6 a.m. to 8 a.m., and declining throughout the day, reaching their lowest levels around midnight, explained Dr Sakshe Jain, consultant psychiatrist, Ruby Hall Clinic, Pune.

High cortisol levels, as seen in conditions like hypercortisolism or Cushing syndrome, Dr Jain said, can lead to symptoms such as weight gain, muscle weakness, high blood sugar, hypertension, and osteoporosis.

Low cortisol levels, or hypocortisolism, can result from conditions like adrenal insufficiency (Addison's disease), causing symptoms like fatigue, weight loss, poor appetite, and hypotension.

Regulating cortisol levels in the morning can indeed help set the tone for a better day. “Since cortisol levels are naturally highest in the morning, engaging in activities that help manage stress and keep cortisol levels in check during this time can positively influence mood, energy levels, and overall well-being throughout the day,” Dr Jain explained. So here are some things you can try.

5 habits to regulate your cortisol levels

Getting quality sleep: Ensuring a restful night’s sleep can help regulate cortisol levels, as chronic sleep issues are associated with higher cortisol levels.

Exercise regularly: Engaging in physical activity in the morning can improve sleep quality and reduce stress, thus helping to lower cortisol levels over time.

Practicing deep breathing exercises: Controlled breathing stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system, which can lower cortisol levels and promote relaxation.

Enjoying laughter and fun activities: Laughing promotes the release of endorphins and suppresses cortisol, contributing to a sense of well-being and lower stress levels.

Maintaining healthy relationships: Starting the day with positive interactions with loved ones or coworkers can reduce stress and help keep cortisol levels in check.

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