

## You Weathered the Storm of Hurricane Irma, But How Did Your Adrenal System Fare?

By Toni Eatros, MS, Dipl Ac, AP

**A**s our community rebuilds from the devastating effects of Hurricane Irma, I want to take a moment to discuss your adrenal health. Unless you live in a bubble, the stress of preparing for, the stress of the possibility of losing your home or business or life, and the stress of cleaning up and rebuilding has definitely taken its toll on your adrenal system.

The HPA Axis is your stress response system. The initials stand for the hypothalamus, pituitary and adrenal glands. When we encounter stress, our hypothalamus (in the brain), sends a signal to the pituitary gland (in the brain) to tell the adrenal glands to increase cortisol output. When we experience weeks of non-stop stress triggers, the “off-switch” can become broken. When this happens, our adrenal glands continuously pump cortisol which can lead to adrenal fatigue or even adrenal exhaustion.

### *Some of the symptoms of adrenal fatigue include:*

- Fatigue
- Depression and or anxiety
- Feeling more emotional
- Feeling like you cannot handle incoming stress
- Weight gain, especially around the abdomen
- Digestive problems
- Hormonal imbalance such as hot flashes or low sex drive
- Low back pain
- Difficulty sleeping
- Dizziness
- Decreased stamina and strength

There are many things you can do at home to help yourself recover from these past few weeks of stress. The most important thing is to rest. Listen to your body. There is a ton of work ahead for all of us during this time of rebuilding, but you do not have to do it all in one day. Shut off your alarm and sleep in, if possible. Go to bed early and nap if you feel fatigued in the afternoon. Treat sleep as a prescription to healing. If you push through and force yourself to over work, you will only damage your stress response system even more. I give you permission. Sit down and rest!



Choose good foods to eat. When stressed, many reach for fast food and junk food. These foods are not healing to the body, and actually can trigger the stress response system even further. Minimize sugar, caffeine, alcohol, gluten, dairy and soy. Caffeine actually forces the body to make cortisol, which is the opposite of what we want to do when trying to heal our adrenal system.

Take it easy with your exercise routine. Rigorous cardio workouts are not what you need to heal at this time. It is best to do light strength and resistance training workouts, stretching, yoga and pilates.

Meditation is extremely helpful when healing. Taking the time to quiet your mind is always important, but it is especially important when you have been through a prolonged period of stress.

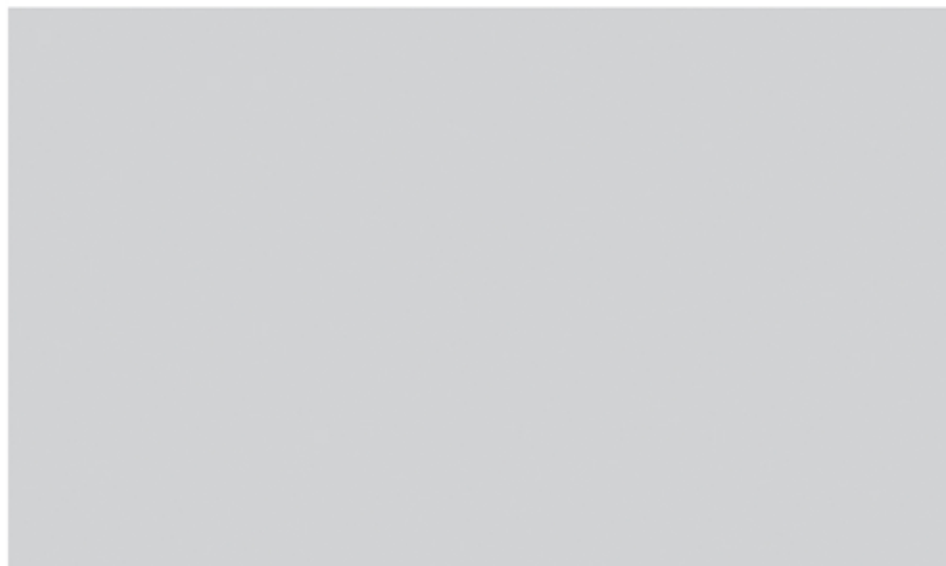
Functional medicine can test the status of your stress response system. If you were having adrenal issues prior to the hurricane, it is possible that the stress of the past few weeks could have put you into adrenal exhaustion.

There are 3 stages of adrenal fatigue/exhaustion. It is possible to fix stage one and two adrenal fatigue all by yourself by taking the time to rest and eat well. If you are in stage three adrenal failure, it is imperative that you seek treatment. You will not be able to pull yourself out of this on your own. The proper building blocks will have to be supplemented in order to fix the “off-switch” and to reboot your HPA axis. Lifestyle changes alone, will not fix this stage of adrenal exhaustion.

Fortunately, most of our homes were spared, but it is likely that your adrenal system was not spared. Ignoring these symptoms and just pushing through will only make you more exhausted in the long run. I have seen this time and time again.

If you find that you are having difficulty bouncing back, I encourage you to schedule a functional medicine visit to determine if you should test your adrenal health. More information can be found by visiting, <https://acupuncture-solutions-online.com/functional-medicine/>

When you experience a trauma or stressful incident, it is critical that you take the necessary time to heal and recover. Functional medicine is the best way that I have found to test and reset the stress response system. Acupuncture & Natural Health Solutions is here to gently guide you in recovering from this time of stress. Please visit the website listed above or call **239-260-4566** with questions.



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