



## HOW TO MANAGE STRESS SYMPTOMS WITH SIMPLE HERBS

In its most basic form, stress is our protector – the ignition to our fight or flight system. When we lived in caves it catapulted us from resting to fighting or fleeing wild animals.

Our bodies haven't changed much since then but life certainly has. We have evolved to function in the resting, relaxing, digesting, sleeping phase 80% of the time and only 20% fighting or fleeing.

Nowadays the tigers we fight or flee are present around the clock in the guise of a 24-hour society. Our brains can't tell the difference between an imagined threat and a real one.

That's why a chemical cascade of fight or flee hormones flood our bodies on repeat when we worry. Is it any wonder we feel so exhausted?

When our adrenal glands, which secrete the stress hormones adrenalin, cortisol and norepinephrine, are repeatedly provoked they become tired over time (like a burst hose, my teacher would say) until we're stuck on alert. Then we can experience palpitations, disturbed sleep, anxiety, brain fog, energy slumps and relapses or worsening of chronic conditions.



### SIMPLE HERBS TO ADD TO YOUR DAILY ROUTINE

The stress-reducing benefits of exercise are well documented, as is the negative effect of the stimulant caffeine. Caffeine is a bit like poking your adrenals with a knitting needle – they don't like it! Yet when fatigued it can become the thing you rely on most. That's why I recommend just swapping out every other caffeinated drink for a non-caffeine alternative. Choose herbal infusions which actively reduce stress, such as chamomile or lemon balm. A relaxing blend may be even better.

### EASY DIETARY CHANGES TO KEEP BLOOD SUGARS STABLE

Busy people often skip meals, or don't feel like eating. Unfortunately, this compounds the problem. A drop in blood sugar triggers the adrenals to manage the release of sugar from the liver – which, in turn, creates more work for them. But eating foods high in protein can keep blood sugars stable. Try grabbing a handful of nuts and seeds between meals.

### BESPOKE REMEDIES AND TONICS

Medical herbalists can suggest remedies specifically for each patient. Licorice, for example, is a wonderful adrenal restorative and digestive support. Gotu Kola is a key adrenal tonic which also helps reduce brain fog. We herbalists also use nervines (herbs which specifically help to support the nervous system) to reduce anxiety – such as California Poppy for overthinking and Scullcap – a favourite of mine – for those who get irritable under pressure. For sleep struggles, Valerian is a classic remedy to help restore calm.

However stress manifests in your life, there are lots of practical ways to get on top of it. Time to ditch the burst hose and be more Zen garden! To find a medical herbalist in your area, go to [nimh.org.uk](http://nimh.org.uk)



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