

SOP: HIGH CORTISOL

PREVENTING OR CORRECTING CATABOLISM & ACCELERATED AGING



OVERVIEW

- **Definition:** Elevated cortisol levels caused by chronic stress, poor sleep, or overtraining.
- **Target Audience:** Women over 40 experiencing persistent stress symptoms and poor recovery.



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- ✓ Persistent fatigue despite adequate sleep.
- ✓ Weight gain, particularly around the abdomen.
- ✓ Poor recovery from workouts.
- ✓ Increased cravings for sugar and salty foods.
- ✓ Trouble relaxing or feeling “on edge”.
- ✓ Wired and tired at night



WHAT TO TRY: INITIAL STEPS & PROGRESSION

STEP 1: NUTRITION ADJUSTMENTS

- **Sub-step 1:** Stabilize blood sugar with regularly timed meals (protein, fiber, healthy fats).
- **Sub-step 2:** Avoid skipping meals or extreme calorie restriction.
- **Sub-step 3:** Limit caffeine intake to mornings only.

STEP 2: MOVEMENT ADJUSTMENTS

- **Sub-step 1:** Focus on low-impact exercises (e.g., walking, restorative yoga).
- **Sub-step 2:** Avoid high-intensity cardio if feeling fatigued or keep extremely short.
- **Sub-step 3:** Include short strength training 2x per week.

STEP 3: STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

- **Sub-step 1:** Daily meditation or breathwork or personal passion (5–10 minutes).
- **Sub-step 2:** Schedule downtime and screen-free breaks.
- **Sub-step 3:** Incorporate Epsom salt baths or sauna sessions.

STEP 4: SLEEP OPTIMIZATION

- **Sub-step 1:** Prioritize 7–9 hours of sleep nightly.
- **Sub-step 2:** Follow nighttime hygiene practices (*see Insomnia SOP*).



SUGGESTED TOOLS FOR TRACKING

- **Metrics to Monitor:** HRV scores, sleep quality, energy levels, mood, cravings, glucose.
- **Recommended Tools/Apps:** WHOOP Band, Fitbit, journaling app.
- **Frequency of Check-ins:** Weekly for 4 weeks, then bi-weekly.



COMMON CHALLENGES & TROUBLESHOOTING TIPS

- **Challenge 1:** Client struggles to reduce caffeine.
 - **Solution:** Gradually decrease caffeine and replace with herbal tea or electrolyte drink, or sparkling water.
- **Challenge 2:** Over-commitment to intense exercise.
 - **Solution:** Educate on the impact of overtraining on cortisol.



CLIENT COMMUNICATION TIPS

- **Tone & Approach:** Calm, reassuring, and supportive.
- **Key Phrases to Use:**
 - "Cortisol is the culprit. Managing cortisol won't happen by doing more."
 - "The body thrives when it feels safe and supported."
 - "Let's look at all sources of stress."



REFERENCES & RESOURCES

- Flipping 50 Specialist stress module, blogs, podcasts.
- <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0378512222001670>
- <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4540814/#:~:text=However%2C%20in%20participants%20with%20moderate,activity%20on%20adrenal%20fatigue%20status>



NEXT STEPS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- ☐ Reevaluate cortisol management data every 4 weeks.
- ☐ Consider saliva cortisol tests if non-compliant.
- ☐ Refer to an endocrinologist if cortisol remains chronically elevated.



NOTES SECTION
