

# Natural Help 4...

# Addison's Disease



## What is Addison's Disease?

Many people ask themselves "[What is Addison's disease?](#)" [Addison's disease](#) is a **rare endocrine disorder** characterized by a severe deficiency of hormones produced in the adrenal cortex.

Addison's affects between 1 and 4 in 100,000 people, including both men and women within all age groups. The disease tends to become clinically apparent **during periods of metabolic stress or trauma**.

Major disruption and illness can occur if the adrenal glands do not function properly. Cortisol is a glucocorticoid hormone that **plays a vital role in the body**. It mobilizes nutrients, regulates the metabolism of proteins, fats and carbohydrates, stimulates the liver to raise blood sugar levels, acts as an anti-inflammatory agent and helps the body respond to stress.

[Addison's Disease](#) can have a **severe effect on all of these bodily systems**.

## Diagnosis of Addison's Disease

The diagnosis of [Addison's disease](#) is based on the patient's medical history, physical symptoms such as **hyperpigmentation of the skin or gums**, and a series of routine tests.

## Symptoms of Addison's Disease

- Abdominal pain
- Weight loss
- Muscle weakness
- Lightheadedness and dizziness when standing

As the disease progresses:

- The skin appears more tanned with a darkening of the lining of the mouth, vagina (in women), rectum and the area around the nipples (areola).
- Dehydration worsens
- Blood pressure drops
- Increased weakness and lightheadedness
- Depression and irritability
- Women stop having their periods

Often the symptoms of Addison's disease are overlooked until an individual becomes ill with an acute infection, is involved in an accident or requires surgery

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causing the disease to advance quickly and become extremely critical. When Addison's reaches this stage, it is referred to as an Addisonian crisis and symptoms are characterized by:

- Abnormal heart rhythms
- Severe pain in the back and abdomen
- Uncontrollable nausea and vomiting
- Extreme drop in blood pressure and peripheral vascular shut down.
- Kidney failure
- Unconsciousness

## Basic Tests used to Diagnose Addison's Disease

- **Blood Tests** - The blood levels of potassium and sodium, and the ratio of certain white blood cells are determined through blood tests.
- **Biochemical Tests** - These tests measure cortisol and aldosterone levels in the blood and urine. Synthetic injections of ACTH (short synacthen test and long synacthen test) are administered to indicate the amount of cortisol in the body and the adrenal glands' response to stimulation.
- **X-ray** - A chest X-ray will help to determine changes caused by low blood volume or high potassium.
- **Ultrasound and CAT Scans** - These tests will be able to check the size of and any damage done to the adrenal glands.
- **Blood Electrolyte and Plasma Renin Tests** - These tests will determine if mineralocorticoid replacement is required.
- **Anti-adrenal Antibody Tests** - If this test result is positive, Primary Adrenocortical Insufficiency may diagnosed.

Consult an endocrinologist (a specialist in endocrine or hormonal diseases) for the diagnosis and treatment of Addison's disease


## What Causes Addison's Disease?

Approximately 70% of cases of Addison's disease are as a **result of an auto-immune process**. The body's immune system produces antibodies against the cells of the adrenal cortex, and slowly destroys the healthy cells. This is a slow process evolving over a long period and can take months, even years, to become clinically apparent.

## Other Factors in the Development of Addison's Disease


There are several other factors that can cause damage to or destruction of the adrenal glands. They include:

- Tuberculosis
- Chronic infections such as systemic fungal infections
- Invasion of the adrenal glands by cancer cells that have spread from another



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## Michele Carelse, Clinical Psychologist



All of our natural remedies are formulated by our expert team of herbalists, naturopaths and homeopaths, and headed by Michele Carelse.

Michele has had years of experience in the manufacturing and use of natural remedies. In addition, she is a trained Clinical Psychologist and has been incorporating natural remedies into her treatment of patients with depression, anxiety, ADD, ADHD and stress for many years with spectacular results.

- part of the body, especially the breast
- CMV virus in association with AIDS
- Hemorrhage into the adrenals during shock
- Surgical removal of both adrenals
- Rare hereditary conditions such as Amyloidosis (protein deposits) or Adrenoleukodystrophy (a neurological disorder)

## Help for Addison's Disease

Addison's disease is a chronic condition and **life-long steroid replacement therapy is required**. The primary objective of [treatment for Addison's disease](#) is to replace the lack of cortisol and aldosterone. Conventional medicine together with alternative treatments and natural remedies can help the person suffering from Addison's lead a productive life.

## Conventional Medicine

[Treatment for Addison's disease](#) include medications which are adjusted to suit the needs of each individual and co-existing medical conditions are taken into consideration-

- Cortisol is replaced orally with hydrocortisone or cortisone acetate tablets taken once or twice a day.
- Aldosterone is replaced orally with a mineralocorticoid called fludrocortisone acetate (Florinef) tablets taken once a day. It is usually recommended that patients receiving aldosterone replacement therapy should increase their salt intake.
- Hydrocortisone, saline (salt water) and dextrose (sugar) are administered intravenously during emergencies like an Addisonian crisis or surgery.

## Natural Remedies

Other [treatments for Addison's disease](#) include natural and holistic remedies which can be **effective in assisting with the relief** of symptoms as well as addressing the individual's overall health and well being.

Herbal and homeopathic remedies are gentle, yet effective - without the harmful side effects of conventional medicine. A combination of herbs such as Borago officinalis (Borage), Eleutherococcus senticosus (Siberian Ginseng) and Astragalus membranaceus (Huang Qi) supports the functioning of the adrenal glands and helps to assist the body to fight the stress of modern day living.

Ginger (which stimulates digestion and acts as an anti-nausea aid to treat symptoms of nausea and vomiting) can be beneficial in lessening the symptoms of Addison's disease. Siberian ginger is particularly effective as a general tonic and helps to relieve physical and emotional stress, while liquorice enhances the activity of mineralocorticoids. Consult a homeopath or herbalist about remedies for your symptoms.

## Complementary Therapy

- Meditation

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[The Natural Beat Blog](#)

[PetAlive Natural & Herbal Remedies for Pets](#)

[Native Remedies - Natural & Herbal Remedies](#)

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- Yoga
- Tai Chi
- Acupuncture

## More Information on Addison's Disease

### Tips for Coping with Addison's Disease

People suffering from [Addison's disease](#) can live a productive life but there are certain measures that can be taken to ensure that they cope better. These preventative measures include:

- Administer medication daily according to the dosage and directions
- Carry a medical identification card or bracelet which will be able to inform medical personnel of your condition and the type of treatment you may need should you be involved in an accident or become acutely ill.
- Treat minor illnesses with extra salt and fluid
- If you experience fever, vomiting and diarrhea, you need to seek emergency treatment - intravenous saline and hydrocortisone is commonly administered
- Increase the intake of salt in your diet
- Monitor your weight regularly if you have been vomiting frequently and your appetite has been poor
- Monitor your blood pressure regularly because high blood pressure may indicate that your medication needs to be adjusted. If you are feeling lightheaded, your blood pressure may be low
- Maintain an open, honest relationship with your doctor where you can freely discuss your symptoms and learn to adjust your medication dosage during times of stress
- Join a support group where you can gain information and support from others who have the same condition

### The Natural Approach

While Western medicine has become the norm in many cultures, it is not the only treatment option. Conventional western medicine, often called allopathic medicine, is the system of medicine taught at most medical schools and most pharmaceutical and synthetic medicines are manufactured and marketed according to the principles of allopathic medicine. Allopathic medicine is also sometimes called orthodox medicine.

Because most of us in the Western world have grown up in a society in which allopathic medicine is the prevailing norm, we forget that, only a few decades ago, homeopathic, herbal and other natural medicines were commonly available – and freely used even by conventional doctors. While there are often heated debates about which system of medicine is 'better' than the other, many responsible doctors (whether they are allopathic or not) recognize that both have a role to play in the treatment program.

Natural medicine has often been frowned on by conventional doctors, especially by those who did not have sufficient knowledge of these medicines. However, it is encouraging to note that some medical schools are now beginning to re-introduce it into their course work, thereby providing doctors with a wider range of



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treatment options from which to choose. In many countries, especially in Europe, India and China, natural and homeopathic medicines are commonly prescribed by conventional doctors and represent a significant part of the total annual drug sales.

Naturopathy is a branch of medicine (just as allopathy is a branch of medicine) which operates according to the underlying philosophy that the body has an innate capacity to heal itself. While natural medicines are often called 'alternative' or 'complimentary' medicines, they are, in fact, a unique and independent form of medicine in their own right, well able to treat a variety of conditions. Perhaps the term 'holistic' medicine is more apt, given the broad range of treatment options and approaches which are to be found within the practice of natural medicine, which encompasses many different disciplines, including herbalism, homeopathy, iridology, osteopathy, chiropractic, therapeutic massage techniques, aromatherapy, acupuncture and many, many more.

Most naturopaths will use a variety of treatment modalities in order to treat their patients in a holistic way to support health, relieve symptoms and prevent future disease. In fact, even the World Health Organization defines health as being "... more than simply the absence of illness. It is the active state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being." This is a wonderfully clear description of holistic or natural medicine, which strives to support health (thereby relieving or preventing symptoms), rather than simply eliminating disease.

Although allopathic medicine certainly has a role to play and has made a tremendous contribution to medical science during the past century, there is a growing perception that it is not the only answer and that, in many cases, holistic medicine can accomplish just as much, if not more – without the risk of side effects, addiction and sacrifice to health so commonly associated with pharmaceutical drugs. Contrary to common perception, and provided that they are manufactured in the correct way, natural medicines can work quickly and safely to promote healing.

In many cases, they can succeed where pharmaceutical drugs have failed. Despite frequent reports that they are 'unproven' and 'untested', the opposite is true. Natural medicines have a long history of usage and there is a wealth of empirical evidence to support their effectiveness and safety. In addition, active clinical research is carried out by many academic hospitals and universities to support the extensive traditional and empirical evidence behind natural medicines.

It is also important to know that, like any medicine, herbal and homeopathic medicines must be manufactured in the correct way, following acceptable procedures and manufacturing methods to ensure maximum effectiveness and safety. Due to the recent rise in popularity of natural remedies, many companies have sprung up to take advantage of the market. Unfortunately not all of them are equipped to manufacture to the correct standards, often resulting in a flood of inferior (and sometimes even unsafe) remedies onto the market – and giving natural remedies a bad name.

Even some pharmaceutical companies have rushed to claim their market share by producing so-called 'standardized' extracts of herbs and offering these as superior to the tried and tested methods of naturopathic manufacturing. Nothing could be further from the truth. While 'standardized' extracts may offer benefit of easy consistency of dosage (and cheaper more efficient production lines), they have grave disadvantages. These include an increase in side effects as the medicines produced in this manner lose the natural protective properties of the herbs. In

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some cases, these side effects have proved fatal – as was seen in the liver toxicity associated with standardized extracts of kava kava, a herb previously safely used for generations without any known side effects.

Most naturopaths recommend what is called the Full Spectrum Method of extraction – which retains the benefits of ALL the active ingredients within the herb as opposed to isolating only one – thereby providing a more complete treatment as well as superior protection against side effects.

Whatever your choice, always choose wisely. Research what is best for you. If you have a chronic or life threatening condition, don't make changes without first discussing them with your doctor in order that your condition may be monitored. Well informed and supportive practitioners will support patients who want to take responsibility for their own health.

## **Related Natural Remedies:**

**AdrenoBoost**: Protects adrenal glands from the damaging effects of stress to maintain healthy functioning

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