

### A Quick Guide to Cortisol & Lifestyle Medicine

Your Daily Rhythms, Stress Hormones, and What Actually Helps

How many times have you heard that you need to "lower your cortisol" to sleep better, feel less stressed, or lose weight?

And how many supplements, powders, or patches have you seen that promise to do just that?

Let's take a moment to clear up the confusion — and walk through what really helps your body regulate stress and restore balance. No gimmicks, just simple tools that work with your body.

### Cortisol Isn't the Villain 🥰 🦾





Cortisol is often misunderstood. It's actually one of the most essential hormones in our body, helping regulate multiple complex system that include:

- Blood sugar and blood pressure regulation
- Inflammation and immune response
- Metabolism
- Sleep-wake rhythm

Here's the thing: cortisol naturally rises in the morning to help you wake up and gently falls at night to help you wind down. This rhythm is healthy — even necessary!

### Let's Bust the Myth



The myth: "Your cortisol is too high — that's why you're anxious, gaining weight, or can't sleep."

And the supposed fix? A supplement.

But the truth is, chronically high cortisol levels are rare. They're usually linked to specific medical conditions like **Cushing's syndrome** or long-term steroid use.

Most people don't have a cortisol disorder — but many of us do live under chronic stress and that's the problem.

#### So What's the Real Solution?

The answer isn't in a bottle. It's in our daily habits and routines — the choices we make each day that can help our body feel safe, supported, and balanced.

That's where **lifestyle medicine** comes in.



#### The Power of Lifestyle Medicine

Lifestyle medicine is an evidence-based approach that empowers individuals to take control of their health through sustainable practices. By focusing on healthy behaviors, lifestyle medicine supports our physiology and helps prevent, treat, and even reverse chronic diseases, promoting long-term wellness and vitality.



Figure 1 Source: connect.lifestylemedicine.org

Let's walk through the **6 core pillars** — and how each one can help support healthy physiology and function.

### **Nutrition**

- Stabilize your blood sugar with balanced meals try adding fiber to every meal to help regulate blood sugar and energy levels.
- Try to eat 30 grams of protein in your breakfast notice if you have fewer cravings or feel more energized throughout the day.

### 🙏 Movement

- **Gentle movement lowers stress hormones and boosts endorphins** even a brisk 10-minute walk can shift your mood.
- Physical activity helps your body use cortisol the way it's designed for energy, not anxiety.



### Sleep

- **Get morning sunlight within 1-2 hours of waking** it tells your brain it's time to rise.
- Set a 9:30 p.m. digital sunset alarm dim lights, power down screens, and wind down.

## Avoiding Risky Substances

- **Swap evening drinks** for calming herbal teas like chamomile or lemon balm.
- **Trade late-night snacking** for mindfulness, body scans, stretching, or massage soothing and sleep-friendly.

# Relationships

- Positive social connection lowers cortisol and boosts oxytocin the 'safety and bonding' hormone.
- Even small moments of connection a hug, a shared laugh, a kind message buffer your stress response.
- Send a 60-second voice memo instead of a text boosts emotional connection.

### 👃 Stress Management

- Try a physiological sigh two inhales through your nose, one slow exhale through your mouth.
- End the day with this journaling prompt: "I noticed... I needed... I'm grateful for..."

# While Lifestyle Medicine Supports Your Health— Mind-Body Medicine Reconnects You to Yourself ♥

The truth is, most of us don't have a cortisol disorder — we have an emotional overload.

Chronic stress from past trauma, people-pleasing, burnout, or never-ending to-do lists can keep our nervous system in survival mode. And when we're constantly in that state, no amount of protein, vegetables or steps walked will be enough.

#### Sometimes, we have to go deeper.

We have to look at the emotional and mental side of our health — not just what we eat or how much we move.

That's where **mind-body medicine** comes in.

It focuses on **self-care as a central part of healing**, not an afterthought.

These tools aren't trendy. They're timeless. They include:



- Breathwork
- Creative expression (like writing, art, or movement)
- Reflecting on how life stressors even the ones we've normalized are impacting our health.

#### **Here's Why This Matters:**

Your body can't heal when it feels unsafe. Mind-body practices calm your internal alarm system — helping you **feel safe, grounded, and able to rest**.

And when your nervous system feels safe, cortisol naturally balances.

Sleep gets easier. Energy returns. Healing begins.

#### **№** Aligning Body & Mind: A Whole-Person Approach to Health

True health isn't about perfection.

It's not about restriction.

And it's definitely not about quick fixes or magic supplements.

It's about tuning into what your body truly needs — physically, mentally, and emotionally — and giving it the support it needs to heal from the inside out.

### Ready to go deeper?

If you've been doing "all the right things" and still feel stuck, you're not alone — and it's not your fault.

As a triple board-certified physician in sleep, obesity, and lifestyle medicine, I take a whole-person approach that looks at your sleep, metabolic health, stress, and emotional wellbeing.

You don't need to push harder.

**You need a plan that truly fits** *you* — one that honors your story, your biology, and your life.

No judgment. No quick fixes.

Just thoughtful, personalized care that meets you exactly where you are.

Because healing isn't just about your body — it's also about how you feel, how you think, and how supported you are along the way.

You deserve more than symptom control.

You deserve to feel safe, rested, and fully alive in your body again.

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