

Herbal Remedies for Stress and Candida



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Are You Suffering From Stress?

We all know what stress feels like.

That feeling of being under pressure, out of control, overwhelmed and unable to cope. It feels like an enormous weight on your shoulders, and whatever you do you just can't shake it off.



Some level of stress is just a part of normal modern life - work deadlines, relationship problems and issue with your health can all add up and sometimes feel overwhelming. For some of us, these feelings are short-lived and are gone within a few hours. For others, intense feelings of stress remain for much longer.

Stress is an overload of either physical or emotional pressure (or sometimes a combination of the two) that makes us feel like we're no longer in control. If left untreated, stress can cause a number of symptoms, some quite severe, that can be both physically and mentally damaging. Not least among these is Candida Related Complex, or a Candida overgrowth.

If you know that you are suffering from stress it is important that you treat it. This might mean eliminating the causes of your stress, or if that is not possible then you may have to find a way to address the symptoms. The important thing is that you treat stress like any other illness. Don't leave it alone, and don't hope that it might just go away. For the sake of your long term health you need to face up to your sources of stress and figure out what to do about them.

Fortunately, there are plenty of natural remedies that can help relieve stress. In fact, because stress can manifest in so many different ways and have many different causes, natural remedies are generally more useful than regular Western medicine. In this book I am going to list the five herbal remedies that I find most useful for treating stress. The advantage of these herbal treatments is that you can try them at home without an expensive visit to the doctor or naturopath. You may also find that each of these herbs has many other health benefits besides just reducing your stress levels.

Why Are You Stressed?

In 1967, some of the first researchers to study the causes of stress compiled a list of the 43 most common stressful life events. These were ranked on a scale of 1 to 100, with the most stressful events being at the top of the scale. The top ranking events included (as you might expect) the death of a spouse or other loved one, marital separation or divorce, serving a prison sentence and illness or injury. However, if none of these applies to you that doesn't necessarily mean that you are not under stress.

In reality, even the smallest things can stress us out given the right circumstances. For example, it might be that you swipe your credit card in the store and it fails to work. Perhaps your pet is ill. Or maybe you just can't pick out the right outfit and you walk around all day worrying that people are looking at you. The causes of stress are so individual and personal that it is impossible to generalize. We can make one statement in total confidence though – we all suffer from stress to some degree, and the reasons for our stress are all different.

How Are Stress And Candida Related?

Identifying the cause of your stress becomes doubly important when you are suffering from a condition like Candida overgrowth. This is because stress makes subtle changes to your physiology that allows the Candida colonies to grow and multiply. You may not realize it, but stress is making your Candida overgrowth last longer. Long periods of stress will also allow the Candida cells to form 'biofilms' that protect them from your immune system. And ultimately, stress will make your Candida treatment longer, harder and less likely to succeed. For Candida sufferers, addressing the sources of stress in their lives should be one of the very first steps in a successful treatment.

The physical changes that your body undergoes during stress begin with your adrenal glands. These are small glands that sit just above your kidneys and that are responsible for several of your hormone levels. When you experience a stressful situation, be it a long-term problem or an immediate 'fight or flight' scenario, these glands release a stress hormone named cortisol. It is this hormone that provides us with the link between stress and Candida.

You might recognize cortisol from weight loss advertisements on television. Studies have shown that one of the results of high, long-term cortisol levels is an increased amount of belly fat. Indeed, some widely-advertised weight loss supplements claim to be able to reduce your levels of cortisol and therefore eliminate your belly fat. In reality these are pretty questionable claims and probably just an excuse to sell you some very expensive supplements. However, it is at least indicative of how stress can make very real physical changes to your body.

So what does cortisol have to do with Candida? Well there are two different changes that cortisol makes to your body that can lead to a Candida overgrowth. Understanding these is key to recognizing the connection between stress and Candida.

Two Ways That Cortisol Can Lead To A Candida Overgrowth

Right now you're probably wondering why we need cortisol at all! After all, it causes belly fat and can trigger a Candida overgrowth, so why is your body even producing this hormone in the first place? Well, there is actually a very good reason, and it concerns your body's reaction to stressful events. When these events occur, your body goes into what is often called 'fight or flight' mode. This means that it senses danger and does everything it possibly can to get you out of that danger. It does this by giving you more energy and shutting down some of your body's systems that are not immediately necessary. This is extremely useful if you are running away from a wild animal, and that is exactly why this hormonal reaction evolved in the first place. However, our sources of stress in modern life are very different.

The first thing that cortisol does is effectively shut down your immune system. It does this to divert more energy and resources to other parts of your body, but the effect is to leave you temporarily vulnerable to disease and illness. Cortisol does this by blocking the activity of some of the white bloods that play an important role in your immune system. In fact, research has shown that a specific type of white blood cell, the CD+ lymphocyte, is inhibited by cortisol.

A weakened immune system removes your first and best defense against a Candida overgrowth. The thing is, in a normal, healthy adult with a fully functioning immune system, Candida really doesn't stand a chance. It's only when we introduce external changes like antibiotics or stress that this opportunistic yeast can start to grow. Remember that at least 70% of people have Candida in their intestines, but it only becomes a problem when we give it the chance to multiply and turn into a Candida overgrowth.

The second thing that cortisol does is to increase your blood sugar. Now this has obvious benefits if you are in immediate physical danger. It allows you to run fast, fight harder and stand a better chance of surviving. However, cortisol doesn't just raise your blood sugar when you are in immediate physical danger; it also raises it during long periods of physical or emotional stress.

The exact way in which your blood sugar spikes higher is well documented. The extra cortisol in your blood triggers a reaction in your liver that converts amino acids and other organic compounds into glucose. Next comes the really clever part. Cortisol also inhibits the activity of insulin, the hormone that usually regulates your blood sugar levels. By overriding your body's natural regulator, it allows your blood sugar to remain at above-normal levels for long periods of time.

A raised blood sugar level is like an invitation for Candida, but this is not directly because of the excess sugar in your blood. What actually happens is that your body now needs far less sugar from the food that you eat. So instead of being processed by your stomach and intestines, the sugar remains there and provides a ready food source for your Candida overgrowth.

What Are The Other Symptoms Of Stress?

If you're not sure yet whether you are suffering from stress, or if that stress has caused your Candida, take a look at the other symptoms that you might be experiencing. Stress symptoms can be much more than that generalized anxious feeling that we all know.

Let's think about some of the emotional symptoms of stress. Low self-esteem, irritability and a short fuse are all ways in which emotional stress can change your character, usually for the worse! If left untreated, these can of course lead to more serious complaints like depression. They can also result in compensating behaviors like emotional eating, alcoholism or drug abuse. That's why it is important to recognize the signs that you are too stressed and act on them quickly.

Stress can cause physical symptoms too. For example you might experience loss of appetite leading to weight loss. Equally, some people react to stress by eating more and putting on weight. Headaches are another typical symptom, as are fatigue, dehydration and inability to focus.

If you think that you are suffering from stress, the good news is that there are a number of medical drugs and herbal remedies that can help. Personally, I prefer the herbal remedies as they have fewer side effects and are less likely to disturb the balance of your body in unforeseen ways. You can also try using some anti-stress techniques like seeing a therapist, massage, exercise, aromatherapy and simply getting more sleep!

Five Herbal Remedies To Try At Home

Any good healthcare professional will encourage the use of self help methods before turning to medical intervention. In many cases, stress responds really well to a combination of herbal remedies and techniques like massage and aromatherapy. Of course, the easiest way to reduce stress would be to identify the source and remove it from your life, but we all know that isn't always possible. Herbal remedies are among the easiest, safest and most effective methods of managing stress. Now, I'm going to list my five favorites.

Ginkgo Biloba

You might already be familiar with ginkgo thanks to its memory-enhancing effects. However, research has shown that this Chinese herb is also a powerful stress-reducing herb.

A 2003 study found that ginkgo biloba significantly reduced adrenal weight, cortisol levels and other physiological symptoms that you would expect to find in individuals under acute stress. Another study found that ginkgo actually reduced cortisol levels. This suggests that ginkgo both improves the body's resistance to chronic stress and enables individuals to cope more easily with stressful circumstances.

Ginkgo is commonly available in health stores and pharmacies. You will generally find it in pill form, it's relatively cheap and long term use is considered safe for most



individuals. As with all the herbal remedies mentioned in this section, if you are pregnant, breastfeeding or experiencing any other physiological change or illness, you should consult with your doctor before beginning any treatment.

The origins of ginkgo date back to 12th century Buddhist monasteries. Indeed, Chinese medicine still uses ginkgo as a lung tonic or to relieve respiratory conditions such as bronchitis or asthma. As with almost all herbal remedies, ginkgo has a broad spectrum of benefits for your body. You might take ginkgo to relieve your stress, but know that you will also get the secondary benefits of improved memory and a healthier respiratory system.

Valerian

Valerian is a key ingredient in lots of those sleep and relaxation aids that you see in the herbal remedy section of your pharmacy. However, its relaxing properties are much different than other sleep aids like melatonin.



Rather than forcing your body to go to sleep, valerian simply has a calming influence that quiets your mind and allows you to drift off peacefully. In fact, studies have shown that valerian does not have a directly sedative effect, and so you can quite easily take it during the day to reduce anxiety.

A 2002 study of valerian and kava found that valerian reduced the symptoms of stress in study participants. This study showed significant reductions in both heart rate and blood pressure among those who were taking the valerian. Another study compared

valerian to St. John's Wort and found that the symptoms of depression and anxiety actually disappeared faster in those who were taking valerian.

You can find valerian in a number of different forms. Your local pharmacy probably stocks valerian pills, while herbal or health food stores will often sell valerian tea. Valerian is not recommended for long term use, and of course you should consult with your doctor if you have any other health concerns.

Passionflower

You can find passion flowers on a family of plants that actually encompasses more than 500 different types. These are the same plants that grow the passion fruits that you might have tasted. In fact, although the flower is the best source for relieving stress and insomnia, the fruit itself also has similar properties.



Studies on passionflower have unfortunately been few and far between. A 2001 study found that it had similar stress-relieving effects to benzodiazepines (prescription drugs taken for anxiety and stress). However a 2006 study struggled to produce the same results. The scientific community may split, but many naturopaths regularly give passionflower to their patients, and anecdotally the results are impressive.

You can find passionflower in liquid extracts, pills or even in tea. I have found that the teas work particularly well to relieve stress. You will also see passionflower as an ingredient in herbal sleep aids and relaxation remedies. As with other herbal

supplements, you should consult your doctor if you are pregnant, breastfeeding or have any other health concerns. Although some do report side effects like drowsiness, confusion and poor coordination, passionflower is generally safe to use for relatively long periods.

Chamomile

The relaxing effects of chamomile tea are well known, but there is some scientific basis for it too. In fact, a 2009 research study found that participants who received a chamomile-based treatment reported significant reductions in anxiety.



Chamomile contains two oils that are generally considered to be the active ingredients in this herbal remedy. One of them is named bisabolol, and it is remarkable substance with a host of helpful properties. As well as reducing anxiety, it is a powerful anti-inflammatory, has antimicrobial effects and reduces pain. Indeed, this compound is considered to be one of the most useful drugs in the natural world.

Chamomile is generally a safe herbal supplement. You can find it in teas and pill form in your local health store. You might also find some chamomile extract. Pregnant women or anyone with health problems should check with their doctor before taking it. One of the active oils in chamomile, coumarin, has a blood-thinning effect which can be dangerous to pregnant women or anyone suffering from hemorrhagic disorders. It may also cause drowsiness, which is why it's such a great herbal remedy to take before bedtime!

Lavender

Last but not least on my list is Lavender, which truly is a remarkable herb with a host of secondary properties which can support your general health.

For example, it is an antibacterial agent, it supports your immune system, it promotes hormonal balance and much more. However, for those of us who are suffering from stress, it is particularly useful in reducing anxiety and irritability, as well as promoting a sense of calm.

Side effects of lavender are usually pretty mild but can include constipation, headaches and allergic reactions. You should consult with your doctor if you are pregnant, breastfeeding or if you have any other concerns.



What Should You Avoid If You're Stressed?

You can take all the herbal remedies in the world, but if you keep subjecting yourself to stressful situations then your stress will never completely go away, and neither will your Candida. Reducing stress is about much more than the pills or extracts that you take; it's also about eliminating or avoiding those environments that made you stressed in the first place.

Of course, not all of us want to quit our jobs or abandon difficult relationships, so we have to find a way to incorporate them into our lives without all those negative effects on our health. This means avoiding confrontation where you can, thinking positively at all times and generally readjusting your mindset so that you don't react in the same way when you are provoked.

We often bring stress on ourselves another way, by trying to do too much. Perhaps you're the kind of mom who prepares breakfast, drops the kids off at school and starts the laundry, all before you start your day job! If so, don't be embarrassed or afraid to ask for help from your partner, relatives or friends. They will usually be glad to help you out.

There are some simple lifestyle changes that you can make to reduce the stress that your body is under. Most of us have a 'crutch' that we turn to for support in stressful situations. It might be alcohol, cigarettes or just a simple cup of coffee. But all these three things will make it harder for your body to deal with stress in the long term. If you are feeling so tired that you need multiple cups of coffee each day, the answer is simple – get some more rest! If you feel you have to wind down after work with a glass of wine, take a hot bath instead (or even make your workday less stressful by taking a full lunch break for once!). And of course you can use the herbal remedies I have listed in this book too.

Herbal Remedies: A Natural Way To Reduce Your Stress

I hope this eBook has provided you with some interesting new ideas. The interaction between Candida and stress is clear, but you do not need to resort to prescription drugs to break that link. The right herbal remedy will often have fewer side effects and be less harsh on your body than prescription drugs, as well as being just as effective. And of course herbal remedies are cheap and readily available too!



I also discuss some techniques for reducing stress in my Candida treatment plan, the Ultimate Candida Diet. Those are more focused on self-help techniques like massage and aromatherapy. For the greatest effect, you can use the herbal remedies that I have mentioned in this eBook along with the techniques discussed in my treatment plan.

Remember that treating Candida is not just about taking a magic pill and watching all your symptoms disappear. It is a difficult condition to beat, and you need to attack it from every angle that you can. That's why in my treatment plan I recommend a combination of dietary changes, probiotics and antifungals. In this eBook I have shared with you one of the ways that you can make this plan even more effective. You can eliminate one of the risk factors for Candida, and possibly shorten your treatment, by adding some herbal remedies to relieve your stress.

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