

STRESS 101

Monday it's stress...Tuesday it's stress...

Ok so we're not kids anymore, and we are big people now and we know that life is in fact not as easy as our parents or teen idols may have led us to believe. The mere mention of Jobs, Children, Mortgage is enough to make some of us develop immediate hypertension. What exactly IS Stress though? How does it work? What is the difference between "stress" and being "stressed out"? What does this mean for our nutrition?

This is a vast topic, and the research data is extensive. We know now that psychological stress has a powerful effect on the body and can affect on a physiological level by mechanisms only partially understood.

We are going to look specifically how we should manage our nutrition during periods of psychological stress. Since we know that the body changes physiologically when under stress, this can have heavy implications for our nutrition and in fact impair our success, and lead to even more stress potentiating the cycle.

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THE PROBLEM OF TOO MUCH STRESS



We will all suffer from high states of stress at some point in our lives, and in today's busy society we are involved in regular stressful life situations, along with frequent and exhausting training schedules



This stress is a burden on the body, and if the stress becomes chronically elevated and prolonged, we can end up massively fatigued and run down



What we don't always realize is the potential damage this is doing on the inside of our bodies and how it affects our health and performance



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HOW DOES STRESS WORK

- At the time of a stressful event, the hypothalamus sends a nerve impulse directly to your adrenals, which causes them to secrete adrenaline
- Adrenaline is the reason for the heightened state you feel after the event, it results in high blood pressure, respiration and heart rate.
- The body also releases glucose during this stressful time
- This causes the release of the corticotrophin releasing hormone (CRH) – which tells the pituitary to release –the adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) – which tells the adrenals to produce cortisol
- One-off releases of cortisol can be a good thing for the body, as they help regulate immune function, repair tendons/ligaments and may even accelerate fat loss
- The problems occur when cortisol is elevated for prolonged periods of time. It is chronic, low level stress that never quite goes away that leads to physical problems



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BAD STRESS SYMPTOMS

Those with long-term high stress levels may experience negative symptoms such as:

- Difficulty falling asleep
- Feeling lethargic most of the day
- Suffering from mood swings or feeling emotional
- Increased blood sugar levels (store more body fat)
- Suppressed pituitary function (low testosterone)
- Suffering from allergies or falling ill frequently
- Increased inflammation
- Learning and memory issues



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NUTRITION & LIFESTYLE TIPS

1

EAT LITTLE & OFTEN



It is important for those suffering from elevated stress levels to eat regularly with consistent meal timings throughout the day



The meals should be nutritionally balanced with adequate protein, fats and carbs. Avoid sugary foods, caffeine and alcohol, which can all have a big effect on blood glucose levels



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NUTRITION & LIFESTYLE TIPS

2

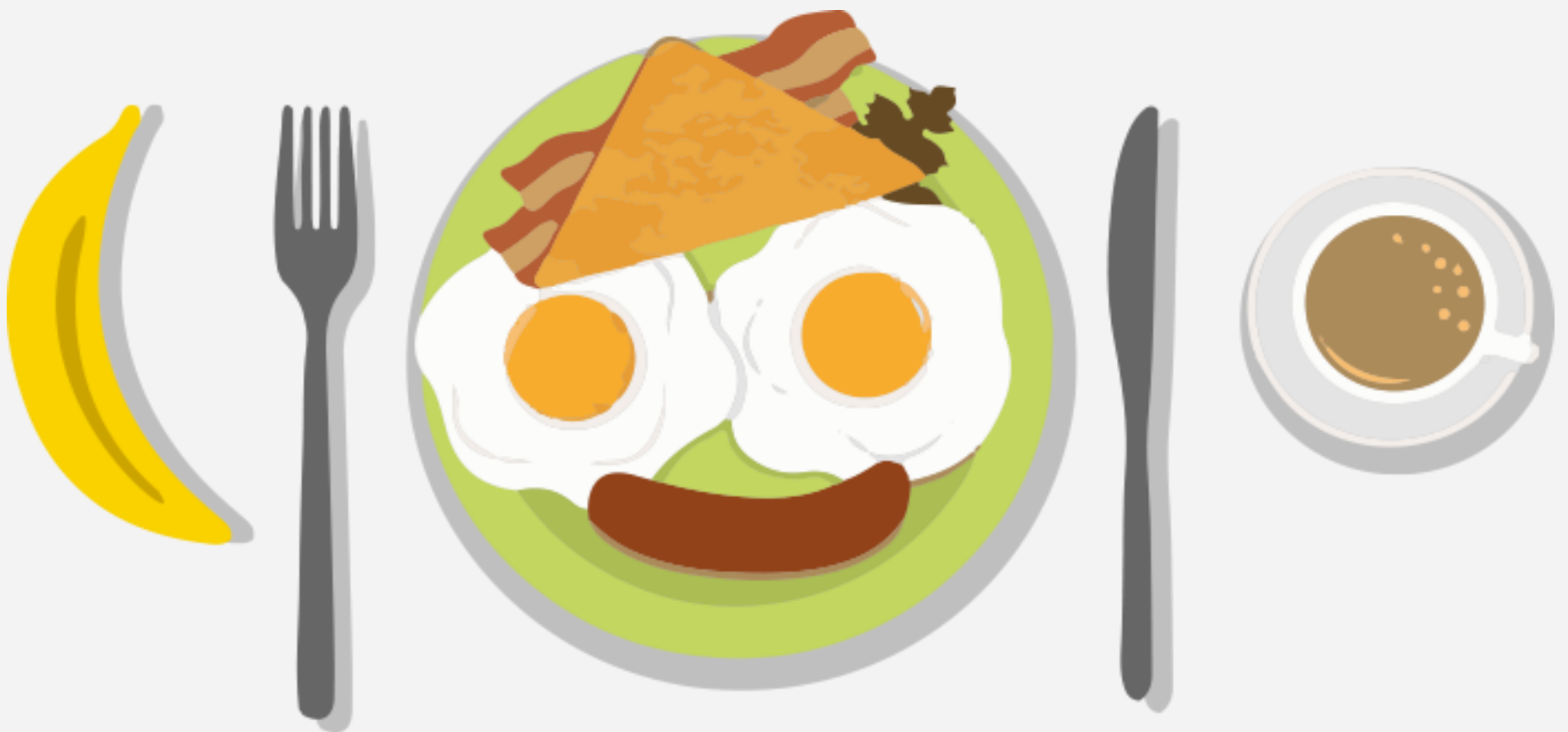
DON'T FAST



Fasting should never be used by those under a lot of stress as it will call on the adrenals to produce glucocorticoids to maintain a level of blood glucose, thus resulting in further overuse of the adrenals



Basically, don't skip breakfast or go extra long periods without food



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NUTRITION & LIFESTYLE TIPS

3

EAT YOUR CARBS



Carbohydrates are the body's preferred source of energy usage, and this becomes more apparent during times of stress



To help provide the energy to support recovery from the stress, you should be following a high carbohydrate diet



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NUTRITION & LIFESTYLE TIPS

4

DON'T STARVE



A low calorie intake during stressful times will only heighten the depletion of glycogen, breakdown of muscle tissue and put more demand on the adrenals



Therefore, you should look to eat at calorie maintenance level or a slight surplus during highly stressful times



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NUTRITION & LIFESTYLE TIPS

5

MANAGE YOUR LIFESTYLE

Diet, training, family, friends, career and money can all be stressful issues at times, and it's important to manage these as much as possible. Find the root cause(s) that may be adding extra stress and then put procedures into place to reduce or eliminate these.

SOME TIPS:

- Exercise regularly (low to moderate activity like yoga, stretching, walking)
- Get some sun daily
- Reduce caffeine, alcohol, sugar and nicotine
- Get enough sleep
- Introduce relaxing techniques (meditation, deep breathing)
- Do things you enjoy
- Listen to music you like
- Laugh a lot
- Have plenty of sex

