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Natural stress reduction

Penny Kendall-Reed, ND

Casein hydrolysate and magnolia bark, two supplements with a sedative effect, may help decrease the release of the body's stress hormones and fight the battle against belly fat.

Stress hormones store a disproportionate amount of food as fat in the abdominal area. Fat cells in the belly have three times the number of stress hormone receptors and therefore attract three times the amount of stored fat to the region. The abdomen is one of the unhealthiest areas to carry weight because belly fat increases the risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes, as well as fatty deposits around internal organs.

Stress reducers

The solution may lie in human breast milk, which contains a high concentration of peptides or chains of amino acids, including casein hydrolysate, and has been shown to possess strong anxiolytic (sedative) properties. This may account for the soothing effect a mother's milk has on a child beyond simply satisfying hunger.
Adults have a mature digestive system that rapidly breaks down the small amount of casein hydrolysate found in cow's milk. By supplementing with casein hydrolysate, adults can experience the antianxiety effect of this naturally occurring milk peptide.

Studies have revealed that milk peptides exhibit effects similar to diazepam (Valium) on the stress response. Decapeptides (component amino acids) demonstrate partial binding to gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) receptors, our chief inhibitory neurotransmitters, allowing for relaxation without sedation or gogginess.

The herb magnolia bark, *Magnolia officinalis*, may also reduce the stress hormone response. Research on humans reveals that magnolia extracts possess anxiolytic and antidepressant effects similar to those of pharmaceutical drugs such as fluoxetine (Prozac), along with an increase in energy likely related to the natural steroid hormone, DHEA.

**Insulin inhibitors**

As both supplements are used to help decrease the release of cortisol, the body's stress hormone, they can be used effectively in the battle to lose weight. Cortisol greatly impairs metabolism and weight loss by forcing the body to produce a higher amount of insulin than it actually needs. Increased insulin secretion forces the body to store more food as fat.

Cortisol inhibits the normal release of leptin, a hormone that fat cells release when sufficient food has been ingested. Leptin helps stimulate feelings of satiety to decrease appetite and suppress food cravings; it is also responsible for activation of the body's fat-burning genes. Without this neuro message, the rate of fat burning can drop significantly, independent of what type of food is consumed, and food cravings rarely dissipate.

Both casein hydrolysate and magnolia bark have no known adverse side effects, and are extremely effective at reducing anxiety, sleep disorders, migraines, weight gain, and several other stress-induced disorders. However, I would not advise using magnolia in patients with estrogen-sensitive tumours.

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Penny Kendall-Reed, ND, is the clinic director at Toronto's Urban Wellness Clinic. She appears regularly on television, radio, and in magazines across Canada and the United States.