Leah (00:01.646)
Hey ladies, let's talk about adrenal fatigue today. And the reason why I used the term adrenal fatigue is because a lot of people resonate with that term and it's become kind of widespread on what it means for you, but…

we do have to learn that adrenal fatigue is actually not a real thing. I know. It's not that your adrenals fatigue and then they just can't produce anything else. That's not what's happening. In reality, what is happening, you wanna think about it as a hypothalamus pituitary adrenal access hiccup. So,

our body is constantly communicating back and forth and back and forth and back and forth. So instead of saying myadrenals cannot produce any more cortisol, we have to say, why are my adrenals not producing the correct amount of cortisol? Okay, because remember,

Your body is always trying to do the best thing for you. So if it is saying adrenals don't produce any more cortisol right now, we have to say, why? Why would my body be doing that? It is doing it out of some sort of protection mechanism, right? Because it's always trying to keep us alive. So then we have to trace back why that would be happening. So in order to do that,

I think we need to understand what cortisol is and how it affects our body. Ready for science class. So when we think about cortisol, we often go, it is my fight or flight hormone. So I run into a bear and the bear growls and my body produces cortisol and I run away from the bear. I actually don't really think that's what you're supposed to do in bear situations, but.

Leah (02:15.534)
that's not actually a cortisol that just got produced, that's adrenaline. So adrenaline is stored and can be released instantly in these stressful situations. Cortisol is made. So it takes about 10 minutes for your body to produce that cortisol. And if we were gonna wait 10 minutes for our body to produce that cortisol, I'm pretty sure the bear ate you. So I think that's important to kind of just know the difference between the cortisol and the adrenaline. So.

Cortisol, what does it do? Like what is its function? It helps us manage stress. It's highly anti -inflammatory, prevents the release of substances in the body that cause inflammation, helps regulate blood sugar. What? Oh, yes, you've heard me talk about that. When blood sugar levels drop too low, cortisol induces, oh my goodness, gluconeogenesis. Don't you love that word? In order to increase blood sugar and help...

provide adequate glucose to cells for energy. In basic terms, basically, your blood sugar gets too low and your body says, produce cortisol, and cortisol brings the blood sugar back up so that we stay okay. It aids digestion by stimulating gastric acid secretion. It assists in the metabolism of protein, fat, and carbohydrates, and it regulates blood pressure. Oh my goodness. Okay, so.

That's a lot, right? That's a lot. And it sounds like cortisol is pretty cool, right? So you probably wanna go now, okay, well, what on earth is the difference between low cortisol and high

cortisol? Do I have that or do I have the other one? Like what's kind of going on here? So low cortisol. So if you are going to test your cortisol, there's...

I guess multiple ways for you to test it. The two ways that I prefer to test cortisol is through saliva and urine. And I like to do it multiple times throughout the day so you can actually see your diurnal pattern of what's going on with your cortisol. So instead of just like testing cortisol in the morning or just testing it in the afternoon or whatever, we're gonna test it as soon as you wake up and then we're gonna test it an hour.

Leah (04:39.15)
An hour. Yeah, it's about an hour after you wake up and then you test it again in the evening and then right before bed so we can actually see the pattern of what's going on with your cortisol because What we want to see is cortisol raises in the morning. Okay, it wakes you up, right and so if you Don't have cortisol you don't have any rise in cortisol. We're not getting up in the morning So again, if we have really low cortisol in the morning, hello. Hello, probably a big reason why you're tired. I

Right? And then we want to see it rise again, even higher at that one hour after waking up. And then you're going to see it come back down in the evening and then drop down again, even lower right before bed. And so that's the pattern we want to see. Now I will say when I'm looking at clients' labs, I see crazy things. Sometimes it's like really, really, really high in the morning and then it just kind of like plummets the rest of the day and it goes, okay, like,

Why is it high in the morning? Like what's going on at night that's causing this high cortisol? Or I'll see cortisol that's just crazy low and then goes up at nighttime. And definitely those are the people that feel wired but tired with like, I'm so tired, but I feel like my nerves are strung to all ends and you could just touch them and I would snap and it would be the end of all of us.

And so then you have to figure out what's causing that. Like is it parasites? Is it blood sugar imbalances? All those types of things. Because remember we talked about one of cortisol's jobs is to bring up blood sugar. So if we're seeing blood sugar rises, especially maybe like at nighttime when you're sleeping, like when blood sugar gets too low and cortisol needs to bring it back up, if you wake up multiple times during the night, probably gonna be looking at blood sugar, right? Because cortisol wakes you up. And if cortisol's bringing up that blood sugar,could be an issue, could be something that's going on.

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So let's kind of like go into the two camps of what low cortisol symptoms are, what are high cortisol symptoms, and then kind of like what that can look like in different stages. So low cortisol symptoms, fatigue, pain, inflammation, because remember it's an anti -inflammatory, allergies, muscle weakness.

Leah (06:56.91)

low blood sugar, hypoglycemia, dizziness, lightheadedness, especially when rising from a sitting or a lying position. Oh my goodness, let me just take a moment to tell you that this was totally me after having kids. It was like, I would stand up and I have to hold on to something. Like, whoa, I am woozy. Inability to handle stress, social anxiety, anxiety in general, depression, brain fog, insomnia,

Cravings for salty foods, low thyroid function, low libido, PMS symptoms. Darn, those adrenals, man. They do a lot. And then high cortisol suppresses the immune system, slows wound healing, reduces calcium absorption in bone formation, it impairs learning, inhibits memory retrieval, increases abdominal fat, elevates blood pressure, disrupts sleep,

by suppressing melatonin. I just want to take a quick moment to talk about the suppressing of melatonin. I had someone that had chronically low melatonin. I am telling you, like every time we ran her Dutch test, it was so low, so, so, so, so low. And melatonin is primarily made in the gut, only a small amount is made by the pineal gland at nighttime. So you know what we did. We like went after the gut.

in supporting the gut, fixing the gut, going on fixing, fixing, fixing, and supporting stress. And her melatonin went from eight to 34. Yes, that was incredible. I thought that was so cool. Symptoms that go along with the high cortisol are hyperglycemia, so high blood sugar, insulin resistance, cravings for carbohydrates, wired but tired insomnia, anxiety, depression, weight gain,

already said that one, poor wound healing, thinning of skin, bruise easily. I think that's kind of important. I feel like I know a lot of people with that. So when you think about all of this, you're like, okay.

Leah (09:10.53)
Maybe you kind of feel like you sit into two sections. You're like, I'm not really sure which cortisol section I sit in. And I feel like I have both symptoms, right? And I think a lot of times, I don't know, maybe we live on two different sides of TikTok, but I see a lot of people who will be like, take ashwagandha, take Alaskan rhodiola that will like solve all of your cortisol issues. Well,

It's only gonna solve your cortisol issues if your cortisol is just ridiculously high all the time, right? You know, if you can't calm down. And if it's because you have really low cortisol, that's not really gonna solve your issue, right? So it's important to know which category you fit in. How do you know which category you fit in? You test, you test, you test, you test, you test. And this is also one of the reasons why I really like

doing an HTMA as well. Because this doesn't test your actual cortisol levels, but it does test what adrenals are doing and capable of at a cellular level. Basically telling us, do we have the minerals? Do we have the vitality, the nutrients that our adrenals need to do their job? And if you don't, well, of course we're going to be having issues because we're not giving the adrenals

what they need to function. So that's why I love an HTMA. And of course we utilize HTMA testing in the hormone reset program. So if you want to do that, you wanna jump in, you wanna like figure this out and start feeling better in that sense and figure out what's going on with your hormones, then 100 % you can go to the link in the show notes or you can just go to LeahBrugerman .com and see when our next round of the hormone reset program is and see if you can.

hop in and get that testing.

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But anyways, let's talk about the few stages of cortisol and adrenal issues. Okay, so.

Leah (11:22.734)
There is another hormone that we're gonna have to talk about with this, and that is DHEA. So DHEA, one of its jobs is to counteract cortisol. So we just heard all of these wonderful benefits of cortisol, right? Manages stress, highly anti -inflammatory, like helps regulate blood sugar. And we're just like, why would we wanna counteract cortisol, Leah? Cortisol sounds awesome.

even though cortisol has just been given such a bad rap. It's kind of like estrogen. You know, estrogen and that pre -ovulatory phase, you know, literally makes your face more symmetrical, makes your lips fuller, like it protects bone health. Like we like estrogen, but we like estrogen in balance, right? Same thing with cortisol. We love cortisol, but we like cortisol in balance. Too much cortisol is catabolic.

So think about that as breaking down the body. DHEA is anabolic. It's going to build up the body, okay? So when we think about the different stages of our adrenals functioning and our HPA axis, we want to think about it in terms of cortisol and DHEA, okay? So.

When we have an acute phase, this is when we have really high cortisol and low DHEA, okay? That means like immediate stress is going on right now and your body's trying to counteract it. So that would be like, I don't know, the being the chased by the bear, like some stressful thing just started happening in your life, things like that. And then we have,

what you can call the compensatory. Compensatory, compensatory. My, Leah, why can I not talk today? Compensatory phase. This is important. This would be normal cortisol levels, quote unquote, normal, with low DHEA. Now, why is this important? Why is this important, Leah? And I'm gonna tell you. It's because so often,

Leah (13:45.39)
I have people that will come to me and they will tell me that they had their cortisol tested and it was normal. And I'm like, okay, normal doesn't necessarily mean optimal, but normal doesn't necessarily mean normal either. You can't just look at one thing. You have to look at everything

together. You have to look at the cortisol sum. You have to look at DHEA and you have to look at their lifestyle and you have to look at their symptoms.

Because if somebody is really, really tired and their cortisol is low and their DHEA is low, I'm gonna go, okay, you're probably coming off of like an acute phase of stress and your body is compensating for it. So we need to come in here and support it so we don't go into phase three, which is the exhaustion phase, which is where a lot of times,

you finally get somebody to pay attention to you because you have low cortisol overall and low DHE.

and your body's just like, we're done. We don't like you anymore. We are just over all of this, right? And it's crazy because it takes like that long for like, it takes that long, you know, for you to finally get noticed and somebody to pay attention to you when we're already in the exhaustion phase. No, no, we wanna like,

become more in tune with what's going on before that, okay? So let's kind of talk about this. Like, how do we get there? Like, what is actually causing, what's actually causing this issue with our cortisol? Because it's not just like one time, right? It's basically like,

Leah (15:48.844)
a continuation of things over and over and over. And there's so many different stresses that can affect this. Okay? So, you can have perceived stress. So what does that mean? Like that is anything that your body is perceiving as a stress, okay? That can be psychological, that can be emotional.

anything that your body is going, yep, this is an issue, okay? A lot of common sources for this are like employment, relationships, financial, traumatic memories, social life, things that we perceive as uncontrollable, not like a physical event, not like you got crushed under a car or you're getting chased by a bear, okay? Not those types. And then things that can also affect,

our HPA axis would be circadian rhythm disruption. What is that, Leah? Okay, that is your body's natural circadian rhythm. So getting up with the sun, going down with the sun, or like somewhat regular.

So oftentimes, you know, we are lacking proper exposure to light, like actual light, actual natural light, and we have too much exposure to artificial light. So you're going to bed on your phone, you're waking up to your phone, you're spending time like watching television. Oh my gosh, I feel like I just aged myself saying that. I don't know why. Does anyone say the word television anymore? Anyways, moving on.

anything that's disrupting your natural circadian rhythm. And that's why it's really important to make sure you're going to bed at the same time, you're waking up at the same time, going to bed at the same time, waking up at the same time, and not going right on your phone, not being

on your phone before bed. I know we talk about it, you hear it all the time, but like, why? Yeah, it's because the artificial light versus the natural light is disrupting your pattern, which is going to, in the long term, affect your HPA access. Okay? Okay. Now,

Leah (18:01.23)
I want to spend just a little, little second on caffeine because I like coffee. Now, I'm going to give you some wonky numbers. So if you're a note taker, you can type this down. Why is it that some people drastically react to caffeine and some don't?

Caffeine is metabolized in the liver by an enzyme called CYP1A2. That's what you could write down if you wanted to. The ability to produce this enzyme is regulated by this gene. So we have two copies of the gene and there's two variants of the gene, A or C. Those with the AA genotype for CYP1A2, oh my gosh, it sounds like mumbo jumbo. I promise this is a thing, are fast metabolizers of caffeine. Whereas those with...

at least one variant of C are slow metabolizers. So those with CC genotypes, genotypes are slower than like AC genotypes. Does that make sense? So you have two copies of the gene and then there's two variants of that gene. Therefore, the same amount of caffeine will tend to have a more stimulating effect on the slow metabolizers than the fast metabolizers.

So those are the people that are like, oh my goodness, like I can drink coffee and I can jump over the moon and then I crash and then I get a headache every time I don't drink it. Those are very sensitive to caffeine, right? And then the other thing that I think, you know, we kind of need to talk about in terms of like,

circadian rhythm outside of like sleep and light and caffeine is glycemic dysregulation. I know, when will we ever have an episode, Leah, where we don't talk about blood sugar? Never, we'll never ever have an episode where we don't talk about blood sugar, because it's so important.

Leah (20:04.686)
So this brings me to intermittent fasting. Oh no, here we go. Skipping meals and intermittent fasting can be a disaster for someone with HPA access dysfunction. Oh snap. Because don't we like hear all the time about why we need to do intermittent fasting for health and longevity and cellular health and weight loss? I don't know, maybe we can do a whole nother episode on intermittent fasting. I'd be more than happy to do that for you. But.

If you have hormonal issues, how many of you probably have some type of HPA access dysfunction? Most of you, most of you, which is why intermittent fasting is just nix, nixay, like don't do it. Not gonna be helpful here. And on top of that, like cortisol levels are different.

depending on which phase of your cycle you're in. So your cortisol levels are naturally a little bit higher in that luteal phase. So this is again, why you're like, okay, maybe eating a certain way felt really good pre -ovulation and then post -ovulation and didn't feel really good, right? Our

hormones, we gotta work with our body here, with, with, with our body. Okay, another thing that can impact our...

towards all levels, our HPA access is, excuse me, I thought I was gonna sneeze on you, but I didn't, inflammatory signals. So allergies, infections, types of diseases, because again, this is a stress on our body, okay? So other stressors that you can have that kinda, I don't know, I feel like maybe can go into their own category would be like lack of physical activity or over exercise. What?

That's a stress on your body? Yes, it is. Gut pathogens, dysbiosis, chronic infections, food sensitivities, toxic chemicals, environmental toxins like endocrine disruptors, heavy metals, EMFs. Oh my goodness, I just need a whole episode on EMF, you guys. Mold toxicity, we've done an episode on that. Nutritional deficiencies. And all of these different things that are going throughout your day.

Leah (22:29.806)
are impacting our HPA access. And then all of a sudden you feel tanked and you feel dead and you go, I got adrenal fatigue. But again, we talked about it's an oversimplification of the concept of your HPA access dysfunction. It's really how our brain and adrenals communicate. So,

Even though we measure their function by testing the hormones that they produce, like cortisol and DHEA, the mechanisms that control the levels of these hormones resides outside the actual adrenal glands, primarily in your brain. So we have to say, why is our brain saying adrenals don't produce anymore? Don't produce anymore.

A true inability of the adrenals to produce hormones is actually called Addison's disease. So if you have Addison's disease and you actually legitimately have adrenal fatigue. So all of that to say, why is your brain telling your adrenals to produce more or less cortisol? So if you kind of want to know what category you fit into, we already talked about

going in and doing some testing, right? But then you also kind of need to go through your little checklist here of like, okay, am I balancing my blood sugar? Because that's one of the causes here. So are you? Okay. Do you have any type of like issues with your circadian rhythm? So are you someone that's spending a lot of time on your phone before bed? Are you waking up like just random times and going to bed at random times?

Are you a night shift person? I know night shift is brutal on your adrenals. Do you have trouble sleeping at nighttime? Cause then we're gonna be looking at, you know, pathogen issues. Are you really sensitive to caffeine? Are you trying around, playing around with intermittent fasting? And are you getting in enough food so your body doesn't feel like it's starving? Do you have hidden infections? Like are you over exercising or are you not exercising at all?

Leah (24:50.126)
have you reduced your toxic load?

And it's crazy how all of these things affect so many other things. So it's just wild to me. This is why I talk about blood sugar all the time, because it impacts every function in our body. Same thing with toxins and endocrine disruptors. When have you ever heard me talk about a hormone and not come back to the fact that one of the things that throws this out is environmental toxins and toxic chemicals, right? And so that's why sometimes,

depending on where you are in your health journey, like you could be, let's say you're in like the beginning to middle and you aren't that sick and you haven't been sick for like a really long time. You haven't had symptoms for a really long time. Maybe you just kind of were like, yeah, I like would like more energy and I would like to sleep better and I like to lose weight. Then sometimes,

It can literally be as simple as getting rid of environmental toxins, getting rid of toxic chemicals, getting some movement in, balancing your blood sugar and regulating your circadian rhythm. It's literally as simple as that. Well, if you are someone that's been on this health journey for a really long time and you feel like you've been trying everything and nothing's working, there's a lot more that we're gonna have to go into it. We have to literally go backtrack, backtrack, backtrack. Why is your brain telling you this? And sometimes,

This also includes brain rewiring because if your brain has constantly been under attack in terms of like infections, blood sugar dysregulation, not getting in enough nutrients, hopping from diet to diet to diet and constantly stressed all the time, your body's just constantly like fight, fight, fight, fight. We are just in fight mode. Then we have to do some brain rewiring. We have to go, we have to put our body in the healing environment.

Leah (26:48.814)
But then we literally have to rewire and train your brain, be like, no, you are safe. You are safe. Because we can't heal when we're fighting and flighting from things. And I know that like regulating the nervous system is kind of this like thing that floats up there in the air and we're not really sure how to handle it. We're like, okay, I feel like I need to regulate my nervous system, but what exactly does that mean? It actually means...

increasing your body's ability to handle stress because we're never going to live in a stress free world. And also rewiring your brain for health because we've had patterns up until this point that we react to things. Your body is trying to fight for you all the time. And so now we need to come back to like, no, this is actually going to work. We're safe. We're going to heal. We have the right protocol. We're doing the things to support our body.

and we're going to be okay. We have to get out of that fight or flight. And that's something that I have noticed regulating the nervous system and brain rewiring with my clients. Since we have added that in, they get results so much faster, like so much faster. So it's not only just getting results, but getting results faster. So yes, that's what we want. So if you...

100 % like yes I need that I highly encourage you to go check out the hormone reset program you can just go to leahbruggemann .com go to the hormone reset program and see what our next round is if you have questions just reach out and ask them okay so happy balancing your cortisol ladies.