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Adrenal Fatigue

FOR
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Learn to:

- Recognize the symptoms of adrenal fatigue
- Get a handle on potential trigger factors
- Take charge of your adrenal health through nutrition, vitamins, and more

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Culinary nutritionist



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and Wendy Jo Peterson, MS, RD**

Foreword by Martie Whittekin, CCN

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Published by: **John Wiley & Sons, Inc.**, 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774,
www.wiley.com

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Published simultaneously in Canada

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2013954225

ISBN 978-1-118-61580-5 (pbk); ISBN 978-1-118-61569-0 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-118-61578-2 (ebk)

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Visit www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/adrenalfatigue to view this book's cheat sheet.

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Foreword

I was eager to interview Dr. Rich Snyder about adrenal fatigue on my radio show because I've long thought it an important issue. He did for my listeners what he and coauthor Wendy Jo Peterson have done in this book: translate complex issues into lay terms. They distilled their impressive research into a guide so practical that it contains recipes. Every reader can learn to feel better, and lives will surely be saved because readers can relieve their symptoms by coming to the aid of their adrenal glands instead of resorting to worrisome medications.

In writing a book about acid reflux, I was shocked that clever marketing has — by convincing Americans that heartburn requires acid-blocking drugs — boosted annual sales of the medications to more than \$14 billion. Acid-blockers relieve pain by stopping normal digestion at the risk of potentially life-threatening side effects. And ironically, the acid-suppression approach ignores the fact that *insufficient* stomach acid is quite often the cause of the reflux.

It now seems acceptable to assume that any health complaint is due to the deficiency of a prescription drug. For example, if a person is depressed, we're told that he or she needs an antidepressant drug (or two). Seldom do we hear that the cause might be adrenal fatigue, which the antidepressant won't fix. The automatic response to high blood pressure is hypertension medication. But again, if an adrenal problem is the cause, addressing it would be a safer, more fundamental solution. Likewise, we see popular drugs for insomnia, anxiety, sexual dysfunction, osteoporosis, and back pain — all conditions that might also be due to stressed adrenals. Although medication may be necessary to manage symptoms (at least temporarily), it carries the risk of side effects and isn't a good substitute for finding the root cause of the problem and fixing it.

Similarly, consumers appear to think that they're tired because they're a quart low on coffee. Little do they suspect that their fatigue (as well as the extra inches around their middles) may be related to stressed-out adrenal glands. Of greater concern is the fact that, like other unaddressed imbalances, unresolved adrenal distress can lead to diabetes and other serious health problems over time.

But then, who can blame anyone for ignoring a body part that they can't see and that doesn't call attention to itself? There are no instantly associated clues like direct pain or a dash to the bathroom. *Adrenal Fatigue For Dummies* provides clues that one's adrenal glands may be overworked as well as specific steps for confirming a problem and treating it.

We shouldn't be deterred by mainstream medicine's rather dismissive attitude about the concept of adrenal fatigue. There's certainly a wealth of supporting science and a huge number of successes in the clinical experience of integrative medical practices. However, except in naturopathic medical schools, little attention may be given to the subject during doctor training. Perhaps an even bigger issue is that third-party payers like insurance companies and government programs don't typically reimburse for the time required to do the detective work of tracking down and resolving these subtle imbalances.

Fortunately, armed with the facts in *Adrenal Fatigue For Dummies*, if readers haven't solved their problems independently, they can be respectful advocates for themselves when they visit their doctor. The right physician will listen and may even want to read the book, which also contains a

great deal of helpful general information about how diet and lifestyle affect health. Happily, most all of Dr. Snyder's nature-based recommendations and Wendy Jo's recipes and nutrition tips will help not only the adrenals but also many other body systems at the same time. Natural approaches are like that — they offer fringe benefits instead of side effects.

Martie Whittekin, CCN

Syndicated radio host

Author of *Natural Alternatives to Nexium, Maalox, Tagamet, Prilosec & Other Acid Blockers*

Introduction

Adrenal fatigue is one of the most commonly misunderstood conditions in modern healthcare. It often goes undiagnosed, and therefore millions of people suffer from it. So if *you* have adrenal fatigue, you're not alone.

Adrenal fatigue isn't in the history books. It's known as a “disease of modern life.”

You've likely felt tired and fatigued for a long time. Maybe you've visited healthcare providers who haven't heard of adrenal fatigue and others who don't believe it exists. Tell that to your body! You know that what you're going through isn't all in your head. Yes, this condition exists, and no, you aren't crazy.

Don't fret — we wrote this book for people suffering from adrenal fatigue. Having adrenal fatigue that has either been undiagnosed or misdiagnosed has no doubt been a frustrating and draining experience for you, but that's about to come to an end. We wrote this book to take the mystery out of adrenal fatigue. We wanted to put a name to some of the symptoms that you're suffering from.

In addition to describing adrenal fatigue, we provide you with the information you need to help you manage the condition. We also want to provide you with support and encouragement.

This book is about a journey to help you take your life back. We want you to eliminate any negativity and embrace positivity. Treating adrenal fatigue is the only way you'll be able to move forward in your life, and you'll be glad for that!

About This Book

Adrenal Fatigue For Dummies puts a lot of good information in 20 chapters. Each chapter stands on its own, so you can reference any chapters you need to in any order. The book has the following features:

✓ **Easy-to-understand language:** It's written in plain English. There's little medical jargon, and this book is by no means a medical reference book.

In some instances, we use italics to highlight medical terms, diseases, and bacteria and fungus names you should know. Drug names appear with the generic name first, followed by a brand name.

✓ **Coverage of all aspects of adrenal fatigue:** We include symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment.

✓ **References to research:** A lot of current research investigates conditions related to adrenal health. And in the world of nutrition, researchers make new discoveries about the beneficial natural chemicals in food every day. One of our goals is to give you as much up-to-date information as possible.

✓ **Info on what *not* to do in addition to what to do:** Knowing what to do (and when to do it) is very important, of course, but sometimes it's just as important to know when to avoid a food, a medicine, or an activity.

- ✔ **Insight of both a physician and a nutritionist:** You're getting firsthand clinical information from a doctor who sees patients as well as from a nutritionist. Nutrition is so important that we dedicate several chapters to this aspect of healing.
- ✔ **Recipes:** Coauthor Wendy Jo offers pages of recipes to help you give your adrenal glands the nutritional boost they need.
- ✔ **Text that isn't boring (we hope):** Because this is a *For Dummies* book, you can count on it being lively, light, and easy to read.

Feel free to skip anything marked with the Technical Stuff icon as well as the sidebars (those chunks of text that appear in shaded boxes). They aren't necessary for understanding, diagnosing, treating adrenal fatigue.

Some web addresses may break across two lines of text. If you're reading this book in print and want to visit one of these web pages, pretend the line break doesn't exist and key in the web address exactly as it's noted in the text. If you're reading this as an e-book, you've got it easy — just select the web address to go directly to the web page.

Foolish Assumptions

In writing this book, we had to make a few assumptions about you:

- ✔ You think you have some symptoms of adrenal fatigue but haven't been diagnosed, and you want more information. Or you've been diagnosed with adrenal fatigue, but you want more details about how to manage and treat it.
- ✔ You want an integrative/holistic approach to treating adrenal fatigue, so you're interested in finding out more about natural therapies.
- ✔ You're starving to discover how to boost your adrenal health through nutrition, which comes from eating the right foods and taking the right dietary supplements.

Icons Used in This Book

The little images in the margins of this book draw your attention to different nuggets of information. We use the following icons:



A Remember icon calls out important adrenal fatigue information that needs to stay with you.



A Tip is a suggestion or a recommendation. It's a quick hint concerning adrenal fatigue.



A Warning describes a serious situation in which you should exercise care and perhaps see

additional advice. Numerous diagnostic scenarios can be critical to your well-being, and you need to be aware of them.



At times, we have to unload a little medical jargon on you or share some other interesting yet nonessential information. Reading these items isn't mandatory. That being said, they provide some insight and doctor talk about adrenal fatigue.

Beyond the Book

In addition to the material in the book you're reading right now, we've put some access-anywhere extras out on the web. For some key facts about adrenal fatigue symptoms and management, check out the free Cheat Sheet at www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/adrenalfatigue. Also, be sure to visit www.dummies.com/extras/adrenalfatigue for free articles about connecting intestinal health to adrenal fatigue, reducing work stress to ease adrenal fatigue, and more.

Where to Go From Here

In theory, you can read any chapters in this book in any order. However, it's a good idea to start with Part I, which covers the basics of adrenal fatigue (such as adrenal gland anatomy, adrenal fatigue symptoms, and so on). Then use the table of contents and index to jump to whichever topic interests you most.

Not only will you gain insight into adrenal fatigue, but you'll also be able to formulate a personalized nutrition and treatment plan with the guidance of your healthcare provider. That plan will get you where you want to go. You need to be your own advocate for this condition, and we hope that this book will be a springboard for you in that direction.

Getting Started with Adrenal Fatigue



Visit www.dummies.com for great (and free!) Dummies content online.

In this part...

- ✓ Discover what adrenal fatigue is (and what it isn't). Healthcare providers underdiagnose adrenal fatigue, so it's important to know the factors that may lead to adrenal fatigue, the stages of adrenal fatigue, and similar syndromes.
- ✓ Understand what the adrenal glands do and how they work. Find out about their anatomy, hormone production, regulation of blood pressure and blood chemistry, pH balance, and interaction with other body parts.
- ✓ Recognize the symptoms of adrenal fatigue. They relate to vital signs, blood sugar levels, salt cravings, feeling sick and tired, bowel and bladder irritation, brain fog, depression, and more.
- ✓ Complete a questionnaire to figure out your chances of having adrenal fatigue, and understand the testing that's done to diagnose the condition. These tests cover hormones, acid-base balance, inflammation, and infection.

Facing Adrenal Fatigue

In This Chapter

- ▶ Examining how the adrenal glands work
 - ▶ Noting the factors and symptoms of adrenal fatigue
 - ▶ Getting screened for adrenal fatigue
 - ▶ Investigating potential causes of adrenal fatigue
 - ▶ Treating adrenal fatigue
-

If you're reading this book, you're likely sick and tired of feeling sick and tired, and you want to know why you feel that way. You know something isn't right, and you're looking for reasons as to why you feel so run down. You may have grown frustrated with your healthcare providers' inability to pinpoint why you don't feel right. You suspect that you have adrenal fatigue.

You can take solace in the fact that thousands of people are experiencing similar symptoms and have complaints similar to yours. This book helps you understand what adrenal fatigue is, examines its causes, and explores how to evaluate and treat this condition.

Focusing on Adrenal Gland Function

The adrenal glands are two organs of the body that people don't often think about. Yet they're vital to your health and well-being because they do so much. To fully understand how adrenal fatigue can affect your health, you first need to understand the many functions of the adrenal glands.

You can think of the adrenal glands as regulators of the human body, overseeing many processes. Your adrenal glands are important in regulating blood pressure and acid-base balance. They're also important in the production of many hormones, which are crucial in the evaluation and management of adrenal fatigue. Examples of the hormones that your adrenal glands secrete include aldosterone, the sex hormones (namely, androstenedione, dehydroepiandrosterone [DHEA], and pregnenolone), and the all-important cortisol. We cover the fundamentals of adrenal gland structure and function in Chapter [2](#).

Figuring Out Adrenal Fatigue Factors, Stages, and Symptoms

If you were to keep your car running 24/7 and never shut it off, your engine would simply burn out. If you never had your car tuned up, never changed your oil, and used lower octane gas, then your engine would be at a much higher risk of burning out faster. Similarly, *adrenal fatigue* occurs when the adrenal glands are constantly working and never have time to rest and recover. Stimulated by

acidity, inflammation, and chronic illness, the adrenal glands secrete way more cortisol than they should.

Cortisol is a necessary hormone. In the setting of an acute injury or illness, this hormone is important in turning off the acute inflammatory process when it's no longer needed. However, in chronic illness and chronic inflammation, the adrenal glands continue to produce cortisol. Over time, the adrenal glands become so fatigued that they aren't able to produce enough of the hormones that the body needs to function on a daily basis, such as cortisol and aldosterone.

A number of factors may lead to adrenal fatigue: heredity, stressors early in life, medication effects, and environmental and psychological factors. In Chapter 3, you read more about these factors, the stages of adrenal fatigue, and the differences between adrenal fatigue and other adrenal-related syndromes, including Cushing's syndrome and Addison's disease.

The best patients are those who are attuned to their bodies. Often, a patient with adrenal fatigue can have one or many symptoms, including constant fatigue that doesn't get better, even with a good night's sleep. You may notice increasing dizziness or lightheadedness if you stand up too quickly. You may notice that your blood pressure is lower than usual. You may find yourself craving salt more. In Chapter 4, you read about many of the typical and atypical symptoms that someone with adrenal fatigue can experience.

Being Tested for Adrenal Fatigue

Proper testing for adrenal fatigue is important to see whether you need supplementation with the hormones you read about in Chapter 2, including cortisol, aldosterone, and sex hormones like DHEA.

But the testing of adrenal gland function involves much more than simply measuring the levels of hormones in your blood. Salivary testing is much more accurate than blood testing. In addition, your healthcare provider should look for causes of adrenal fatigue by measuring toxin levels, searching for food sensitivities, and looking for potential causes of inflammation. See Chapter 5 for more information on being tested for adrenal fatigue.

Digging Deeper into Potential Triggers

After you recognize the symptoms of adrenal fatigue, you want to determine its causes. Major causes include chronic stress, lack of sleep, chronic inflammation, acidity, poor nutrition, and impaired intestinal health. You can't begin to treat adrenal fatigue without treating these underlying conditions. This section gives you a brief overview of these specific trigger factors; in Part II, you read about them in depth.



Adrenal fatigue is often a result of multiple causes that occur simultaneously. For example, someone with a chronic illness likely suffers from increased inflammation, has poor nutrition, lacks quality sleep, and has an unhealthy intestinal tract.

Stressing out and sleeping poorly

In Chapter [6](#), you read about the many kinds of stress people in modern times have to deal with (the adrenal glands have to deal with these multiple stresses as well). These include emotional stressors, physical stressors, and other stressors that you may not even be aware of, including electromagnetic stress.

Chapter [6](#) also discusses how people sleep poorly and how they can sleep better. Notice we didn't say sleep *longer*. Certainly, getting seven to eight hours of good quality sleep each night is important, but even if you get the requisite number of hours, you still may be sleeping badly. Sleeping *better* involves improving both sleep quantity and sleep quality.

Being inflamed and out of balance

Inflammation often goes hand in hand with adrenal fatigue, so it's important to be aware of inflammation's potential triggers. Chapter [7](#) covers some of those triggers, including chronic illnesses such as rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, fibromyalgia syndrome, Lyme disease, thyroid dysfunction, and celiac disease.

Another potent trigger of adrenal fatigue is acidosis. The kidneys and adrenal glands can get extremely stressed out trying to deal with the daily acid load that people impose on them each day through the Western diet and conditions such as diabetes. See Chapter [7](#) for information on acidosis.

Handling nutrition issues

Proper nutrition is vital to combating adrenal fatigue. The food choices you make can directly affect the health of your intestines, and the intestines are the root of all chronic illness and inflammation. If you have a healthy gut, then the amount of inflammation in your body is likely minimal. A diet high in sugar and processed foods, on the other hand, can increase the risk of yeast overgrowth in the intestine, inciting even more inflammation. Eating foods that you may be sensitive to or even allergic to can also have toxic and inflammatory effects on your body.

You should also be aware of the role nutrient deficiencies play in the perpetuation of total body inflammation and adrenal stress. You may eat three meals a day but still be severely malnourished. Deficiencies in minerals and vitamins can cause issues with your health.

Chapter [8](#) has the lowdown on the role that nutrition plays in adrenal fatigue.

Getting Treated



Everyone is different, and not everyone manifests symptoms of adrenal fatigue the same way. So although the treatment of adrenal fatigue is complex and multifaceted, it is (and should be) personalized to fit your particular health concerns and health needs. In Part [III](#), we get to the nitty-gritty of treating adrenal fatigue.

Finding a practitioner

One of the most challenging aspects of diagnosing and treating adrenal fatigue is finding a good healthcare provider who has an understanding of this condition. Your current doctor or healthcare provider may not even be aware of the condition or give credence to its existence. In Chapter [9](#), you

read about healthcare practitioners who have expertise not only in recognizing the condition but also in diagnosing and treating it. Examples include naturopathic physicians, holistic medical physicians, and other healthcare practitioners certified in anti-aging medicine.

Nutritionists are also invaluable because the first line of defense in improving your adrenal health is nutrition. Changing how you eat and choosing the right foods can make your adrenal glands stronger and allow you to feel better. It's no accident that a nutritionist, Wendy Jo Peterson, is a coauthor of this book. She's restored thousands of people to better health and a fuller life.

Chapter [9](#) explores a team approach to your health and wellness care. Maintaining communication and holding yourself accountable for changes you need to make are key to your success.

Making the most of medications and hormone supplements

After you identify one or more healthcare providers to work with, you can begin to talk about the treatment of adrenal fatigue. Chapter [10](#) reviews some of the medications that your practitioner may prescribe to help raise your blood pressure and keep it in an acceptable range.

Chapter [10](#) also explores some of the hormones that your healthcare provider may prescribe to treat adrenal fatigue, including hydrocortisone and fludrocortisone. The results of testing (see Chapter [10](#)) determine whether you need to be on supplements along with these hormones. We also discuss hormone replacement with bioidentical hormones such as estrogen, progesterone, and DHEA.



Because the treatment of adrenal fatigue is personalized, your treatment plan may not require bioidentical hormone replacement. The plan for treatment depends on the levels of your hormones.

Considering alternative treatments

In your journey to overcome adrenal fatigue, supplementing your diet with extra nutrients can make all the difference, but you need to be careful. Treatment should not only support the adrenal glands but also address the underlying conditions that are causing the adrenal fatigue in the first place.

In Chapter [11](#), you read about ways to replace minerals and vitamins, increase cellular energy levels, reduce inflammation, provide antioxidant support, and normalize your body's pH and intestinal health. Chapter [11](#) also discusses getting better sleep with supplements, using herbs, and undergoing detoxification.

Eating and exercising well

Two big ways that you can help your adrenal glands are committing to a regular exercise regimen and eating the right foods. In Chapter [12](#), we give you exercise pointers that can help you feel better, reduce stress, and improve your sleep, all of which reduce adrenal stress. An exercise regimen consists of aerobics (like walking and biking), resistance training (such as lifting weights) and meditative exercises (like yoga and t'ai chi).

This chapter also provides some basic nutrition guidelines to improve adrenal health and combat adrenal fatigue. You read about nutritious, high-quality food that not only boosts adrenal gland function but also tastes delicious.

Taking care of yourself at work

Work-related stress is epidemic. Many people spend more time at work than with their families. In Chapter [13](#), you read about ways to reduce stress, incorporate exercise into your daily routine, and eat healthier in the workplace. We explain the importance of enjoying some time off from work and help you avoid brain fog in the workplace, where you need to be able to think clearly and function well.

Trying Great Recipes for Combatting Adrenal Fatigue

In Part [IV](#), the focus is on getting you in the kitchen for some great, tasty recipes to help combat adrenal fatigue. From energizing breakfasts in Chapter [14](#) to fuel-food lunches in Chapter [15](#) to delicious dinners in Chapter [16](#), you get some of coauthor Wendy Jo's mouthwatering recipes that not only satisfy the palate but also combat adrenal fatigue and help you flourish.

If you're going to sneak in a snack, why not make it healthy and delicious? In Chapter [17](#), Wendy Jo shares some ideas for snacks and desserts that both fortify and satisfy you.

Understanding the Basics of Adrenal Gland Function

In This Chapter

- ▶ Surveying the adrenal glands' structure
 - ▶ Making important hormones
 - ▶ Regulating blood chemistry and pH
 - ▶ Working with other organs
-

If you think of your body as an orchestra, the adrenal glands are the conductors. They regulate many important processes:

- ✓ Producing hormones
- ✓ Keeping blood pressure, blood chemistry, and the body's acid-base balance in check
- ✓ Maintaining your strength and vitality, as the adrenal glands work with a number of other parts of the body, especially the hypothalamus and the pituitary gland
- ✓ Regulating the immune system; if you have adrenal fatigue, then your immune system isn't as effective in fighting off infection

These conductors are responsible for keeping your body in balance in response to the many stresses, both psychological and physical, that you're exposed to on a daily basis. If your adrenal glands are out of kilter, your body slowly begins to wear down. When the adrenal glands aren't healthy, you're unable to cope with daily stresses.

The good news is that if you keep your adrenal glands healthy, the other systems in your body will work that much better. You'll feel better, get a better night's rest, and have more energy and passion in your daily life.

In this chapter, you find out about the adrenal glands' anatomy and functions. When you begin to recognize all that the adrenal glands are responsible for, you'll be able to recognize the early warning signs and symptoms of adrenal fatigue and why they're important.

Checking Out the Anatomy of an Adrenal Gland

Before delving into adrenal fatigue, you should have a working knowledge of the structure and function of the adrenal glands. Understanding where they are and how they interact with other organs of the body is important in helping yourself, because the more you know, the better advocate you can be for your own health.

The two adrenal glands are shaped like little triangles, and they sit atop the kidneys in much the same way a hat sits atop someone's head (see Figure 2-1). Using the spine as a reference, they're under your ribs where your mid back area (the *thoracic spine*) meets your lower back (the *lumbar spine*). Because the adrenal glands and the kidneys are so attached to one another, health conditions that affect the adrenal glands can affect the kidneys as well. In Chinese medicine, the kidneys and adrenal glands are actually thought of as being one organ system.

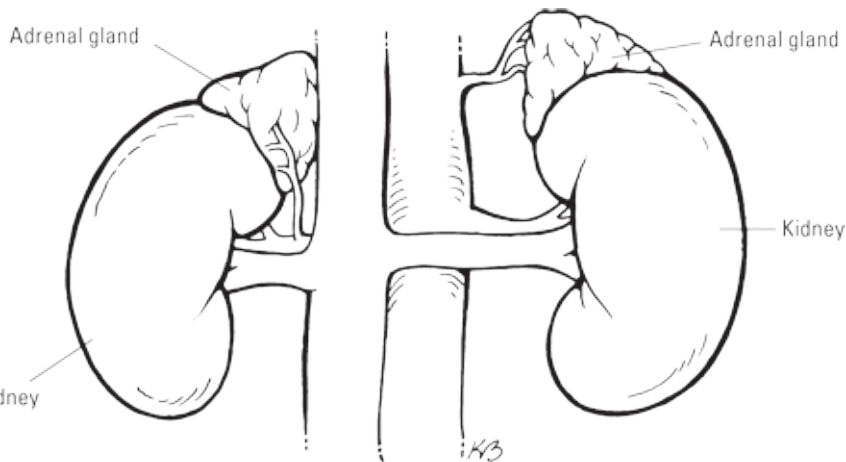


Illustration by Kathryn Born, MA

Figure 2-1: Your adrenal glands are on top of your kidneys.

Each adrenal gland has an outer part and an inner part, all enclosed by a capsule (see Figure 2-2). Here's what each part does:

- ✓ **Adrenal capsule:** This capsule of connective tissue encases the adrenal gland, serving as a protective layer. It's primarily composed of adipose tissue (fat).
- ✓ **Adrenal cortex:** This outer part of the adrenal gland comprises more than 75 percent of the adrenal gland. It has three zones, each of which performs a distinct function:
 - The *zona glomerulosa* makes the blood-pressure regulating hormone aldosterone.
 - The *zona fasciculata* makes cortisol.
 - The *zona reticularis* makes sex hormones such as dehydroepiandrosterone (commonly known as DHEA).
- ✓ **Adrenal medulla:** This inner part of the adrenal gland produces hormones such as epinephrine.

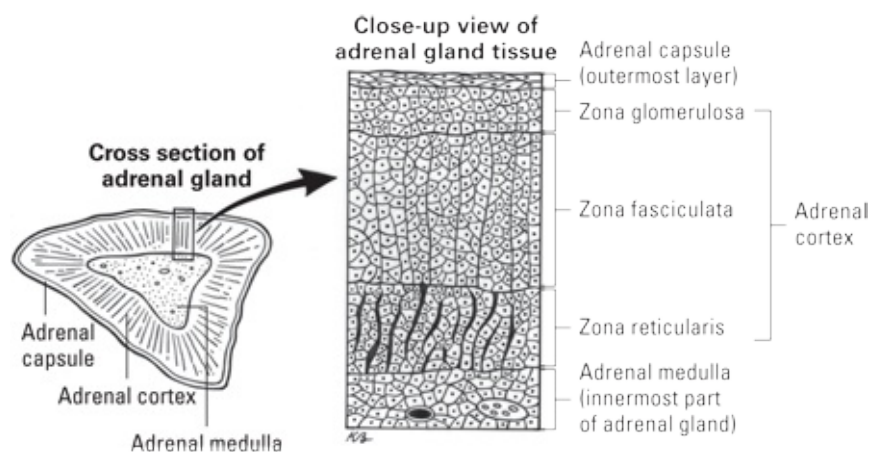


Illustration by Kathryn Born, MA

Figure 2-2: Anatomy of the adrenal gland.

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