

Ask Leyla: Could green tea be causing me adrenal stress?



Q: I drink about three to five cups of organic green tea every day. I mentioned to my chiropractor that menopause has brought me disrupted sleep and difficulty burning fat and building muscle even though I'm a CrossFitter, do yoga, play tennis, etc.

He suggested I may be stressing my adrenals and recommended I give up coffee, which I have, but that my green tea intake may be excessive and hindering my fitness goals and disrupting my sleep. I only drink tea before noontime. Do you think it's still affecting me given I have it so early in the day?



A: Your chiropractor is correct. Caffeine can stress the adrenal glands for many hours after consumption and the residual effects may still be felt at bedtime and throughout the night, disrupting sleep. This is a common problem in susceptible individuals and you are testimony to that. I would recommend a salivary cortisol test to assess your adrenal function. It would be a good idea to get your DHEA levels checked, too.

Due to menopause, you are no longer awash in progesterone, which was likely counteracting the effects of caffeine for you before menopause. Progesterone has a unique ability to help us chill out. It's a different story now, as you well know. Low progesterone itself can contribute to adrenal fatigue, especially when under a lot of stress.

When our adrenals are stressed on a daily basis, be it from stressful lifestyles or stimulants such as caffeinated beverages, the adrenaline (epinephrine) and cortisol secreted are literally mugging us. No wonder sleep becomes elusive. Chronic stress will eventually cause skin thinning (read: aging) and compromise bone mineral density.

While green tea contains beneficial L-theanine, which has a sedating effect that attenuates the caffeine jolt, it's likely not enough for you. I would recommend switching to a naturally decaffeinated green tea so you continue getting the benefits of EGCG. Then you can get deep restful sleep and have the energy to reach your fitness goals.

To your health!