

The National

When stress takes its toll

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On a research trip through Sri Lanka a few years ago, I sat opposite a chilled out American woman at The Secret Garden guesthouse in Unawatuna. She took one long look at me and said in a deep, relaxed accent: "Man, your adrenals are on the floor". Uptight, stressed, overwhelmed by the heat and only just holding myself together, I looked at her in uncomfortable bemusement, wondering what my adrenals were and how I might pick them up off the floor.

As I continue travelling – too much and too often – therapists regularly tell me I need to restore my depleted adrenals, which are the body's "fight or flight glands". When humans were cave dwellers, their adrenals would kick in when they hunted or ran from wild animals. Today, our adrenals work overtime in reaction to minor and major incidents alike: when multiple telephones ring at once or swerving the car to avoid hitting another vehicle.

Our bodies don't differentiate between physical stress (being mugged), emotional stress (an unhappy relationship) and psychological stress (meeting constant deadlines), so when such stressors are prolonged and unrelenting, the adrenal glands can show constant tiredness, but other common signs include weight gain, poor immunity, stomach ulcers, reduced fertility, insomnia and even diabetes, elevated cholesterol and cardiovascular disease.



There is little research on the depletion process, but it shows when the adrenals are seriously burnt out, it can lead to disease. Otherwise, there is no way of checking self-monitoring. Feeling exhausted and irritable

If you're hovering on the brink of burnout, there is a dedicated period of rest and rejuvenation, followed by treatments tailored to my needs and nutritional

I was advised to eat foods rich in calcium and magnesium, such as leafy vegetables and beans. In particular, reddish vegetables like aubergines would help "build up my blood". I was also advised to eat in omega-3 fatty acids like salmon, and eat anin Chinese astragalus herbs, Siberian ginseng, and other herbs are also known for helping to treat long-term fat

water and can really feel the difference.

To prevent adrenal burnout, go for treatments that restore and release energetic and emotional energy. This can be achieved through massage, Thai or ayurvedic massage, acupuncture, shiatsu, and the uncomfortable but effective "nei tsang".

A dedicated period of time at a wellbeing retreat is a good way to kick start your rest period and learn some techniques to take home. I checked in for two weeks at Kamalaya in Thailand (www.kamalaya.com) a holistic retreat that offers a clever Balance & Revitalize programme specifically designed to help you de-stress. You can also book it and other de-stress programmes with specialist Wellbeing Escapes (www.wellbeingescapes.com) as little travelling as possible for quite some time.

Caroline Sylger Jones is the author of [Body & Soul Escapes](#) and [Body & Soul Escapes: Brit places to retreat and replenish around the world](#). See www.carolinesylgerjones.co.uk.

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