



*The Canadian Addison Society*  
*La Société canadienne d'Addison*

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**Addison Info**

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For those of you whom I haven't met or spoken to, my name is Angela Timms and I am the mother of Geoff, our 12 year old son who was diagnosed last spring with Addison's Disease. This past summer, we participated in "Our Addison Kids" Project, a support booklet written by and for Addison patients and their families. It is published by Joan Hoffman, our "Addison News" correspondent publisher in Michigan with some financial assistance from Marie Morrison, herself an Addisonian. In it are 5 entries from across Canada.

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**From Greta**

Since the New Year, I had been waking up at 5 or 6 am with a bad headache, sometimes taking Tylenol 3, but when I rose at my usual time around 8, I'd take my insulin (diabetes) and eat breakfast. Sometimes I lost both my breakfast and pills due to nausea and had to take more. My endocrinologist reduced my insulin by 2 units morning and night, & increased my morning prednisone from 5mg & 2 1/2 mg 4 nights a week to 5 mg & 2 1/2 mg 7 days a week. At first it didn't make much difference & my sugar went up, so I started taking insulin at 6 am and having breakfast. The headaches & nausea have gradually disappeared & less gas also. I also increased my evening insulin by 1 unit. I would like to know if this has ever happened to other Addisonians?

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**Questions and Quotes:**

We would like to do a future edition on special diets that any of our members are on. Also, if any of you have food allergies?

Dorothy Frewing, one of our members, had surgery and afterward was on an intravenous drip to which they added a sulfur-based medication that caused hallucinations and extreme anxiety. Has anyone else had a problem that way?

We have on hand prescribing information for Cortisone Acetate, 25 mg. tablet. Also we have a sheet on Florinef and Fosamax. Is there anyone else taking Didronel for Osteoporosis?

We are still waiting to hear from Dr. Waterhouse.

Special thanks to Joan Hoffman for donating a copy of "Our Addison Kids" booklet to our library. Borrowers welcome.

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## The Toronto Star “Wellesley Hospital – Exercise and Hormones”

Regular exercise may stimulate the pituitary gland to produce more growth hormone. Or it maybe that an active pituitary makes a person more eager to be active. Dr. Shereen Ezzat, a leading specialist in Pituitary Endocrinology at Wellesley Hospital is conducting a study to determine which is the cause and which is the effect.

Exercise naturally stimulates production of growth hormone and many healthy older people tend to have active lifestyles, Ezzat says, adding that this suggests growth hormone plays a role in a more youthful older age. Growth hormone is one of 6 hormones produced by the pituitary gland, the body's master switch for hormone production. At Wellesley's Pituitary Centre, early results of a clinical study in which people whose pituitary gland isn't working normally are given growth hormone supplements, show that those receiving the supplements feel less depressed & can exercise longer than a control group of patients not getting the supplement. Furthermore, those in the study getting supplements for at least 6 months have become slimmer, losing up to 25% body fat.

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### A Statistic

I am different from you. Very different. I am a rare statistic. In a city of 60,000, I am the only one with Addison's Disease.

The word disease is misleading. It's a condition, a hormone deficiency - Adrenocortical Deficiency. Two words which mean the adrenal glands do not function normally.

The adrenal glands are tiny organs that sit on top of the kidney. They are in constant communication with the other main hormone producers. The Pituitary Gland (in the brain), thyroids (in the neck), ovaries/testes and kidneys are all affected by the shut-down of the adrenals. Shutdown means failure. To me, it means exhaustion from low blood-pressure, muscle weakness, dehydration due to loss of sodium chloride and water, attacks of vomiting, nausea and diarrhea. It also means looking tanned although ill because of increased pigmentation. Emotionally, it means being very irritable and depressed. Without proper treatment immediately, one can die.

With Addison's, death is only a day or two away without medication. I learned that very early. Living with undiagnosed Addison's - living on a roller-coaster of manic-depressive highs and lows, and suicidal thoughts were a private hell. I thought I was insane. My Mother did, too. Every day I would wonder what was wrong with me and why. I thought hard about suicide - the depression was overwhelming. I decided that night to live, and find out why. I wanted to live.

I left my small town and went in search of answers. I went to 3 different doctors and just as many therapists before meeting an endocrinologist. A gland doctor. After running several tests, he sat me down and handed me a prescription for cortisone. He informed me my adrenals didn't work. He said I'd be on it for life. He rolled off a few statistics on my various hormone levels and left me with that.

It took a couple more years of everyday living and stress to ask for more of an answer. I needed more. I needed a name for what I had, an understanding of how to adequately cope with this problem.

Feeling disloyal to my original endocrinologist, I searched for a second opinion. I told him my history - he ran a few tests and said "Yes, it's Addison's". He gave me florinef to keep my blood pressure on an even keel. I was so relieved, elated and scared at once. I had a name!! I had a doctor who knew about the disease and could help me understand. I really wasn't crazy!! I was just a statistic. Now I am crazy about life!! I realize how big a role hormones have in the processes of the body. I believe they are as important as the heart or brain. Hormones are the messengers that ensure everything in the body functions normally. If one is under or over-produced, all else is thrown off and to some degree, affects the brain and the heart.

Adrenal glands produce 3 kinds of important hormones: cortisol is the body's converter, changing proteins and fats to carbohydrates, modifying the body's response to inflammation and stimulating the liver to raise blood sugar. Without cortisol, you can develop digestion problems, and fighting infections or having energy at all becomes unattainable. The second hormone, aldosterone, is the body's messenger. It communicates to the kidneys when to eliminate potassium and when to retain sodium. This process regulates blood pressure. Without it, you feel faint a lot going from standing to sitting or vice-versa. The third group are the reproductive hormones, involving the ovaries/testes, pituitary and the thyroids. They work together to attain a correct balance of hormones to allow puberty and growth to set in. Unbalanced, a snowball effect occurs and leads to other hormone disorders.

For the Addison patient, cortisone and florinef replace the role of the adrenal hormones. Still, there is danger. The adrenals are the body's stress buffers. It helps us in our choice of fight or flight under stress by supplying adrenalin at the right time. No adrenals mean no adrenalin. Stress is the enemy.

Under stress, the body naturally increases cortisol production to fight off inflammation (illness) like a diabetic checking his blood glucose level. I have to think and monitor the stress in my life. I have to constantly determine, without medical aid(s), if I need to increase my cortisone intake. Failure to adjust the medications properly and on time means illness eventually, and/or a trip to the doctor's office (hospital emergency ward). For every visit, you get more of an understanding of how stress and hormones interact in the body. More importantly, you learn how not to let stress get to you, to avoid getting sick. It is a lifelong lesson in learning to live with what you cannot change, and understanding what you can do.

I am different from you because I am blessed with a condition that has allowed me to recognize stress in all I do and value life's seconds. I have learned to be calm. I've been forced to accept what has happened, forced to accept myself. I am still isolated as a rare statistic, but I know now, I was never insane.

By Loreana Thompson