

Cortisol Management Checklist

Managing cortisol is essential for restoring balance in the body, supporting energy, mood, digestion, and hormonal harmony. By intentionally nurturing key pillars—nutrition, movement, sleep, stress management, and community—you can guide your body out of chronic stress and into a healing state. Use this checklist as a practical daily reference to support your cortisol detox journey.

Nutrition & Hydration

Support stable blood sugar and reduce physiological stress by nourishing consistently.

- ☐ **Prioritize Protein & Healthy Fats:** Include protein at each meal (eggs, chicken, salmon) and fats (avocado, walnuts, olive oil) to prevent cortisol-spiking blood sugar crashes.
- ☐ **Eat Regular Meals:** Avoid long fasting windows if cortisol is high—aim to eat every 3–4 hours.
- ☐ **Low-Glycemic Carbs:** Choose oats, berries, leafy greens, and vegetables over refined sugars.
- ☐ **Anti-Inflammatory Foods:** Garlic, turmeric, ginger, berries, leafy greens, chia seeds, flaxseeds.
- ☐ **Stay Hydrated:** Minimum 2–3 liters of water daily; add electrolytes or a pinch of sea salt to support adrenal function.
- ☐ **Limit Stimulants:** Reduce caffeine, especially before breakfast—never consume coffee on an empty stomach.
- ☐ **Balance Blood Sugar at Breakfast:** Start with a protein-rich meal within 60 minutes of waking



Movement

Exercise should support, not stress, the adrenals.

- ☐ **Daily Gentle Movement:** Prioritize walks, stretching, mobility work.
- ☐ **Strength Training (Moderate):** 2–3x/week—focus on functional, not exhaustive, workouts.
- ☐ **Avoid Overtraining:** Excessive HIIT or endurance exercise can elevate cortisol.
- ☐ **Mind–Body Practices:** Incorporate yoga, pilates, tai chi, or breath-led mobility to calm the nervous system.
- ☐ **Outdoor Time:** Morning sunlight walk to anchor circadian rhythm and naturally regulate cortisol



Sleep

Cortisol health depends heavily on circadian rhythm.

- ☐ **Consistent Sleep Schedule:** Sleep and wake at the same time daily (including weekends).
- ☐ **Wind-Down Routine:** Dim lights, turn off devices 1 hour before bed, use calming rituals.
- ☐ **Dark, Cool Bedroom:** Optimize sleep environment (dark curtains, cool temperature, no screens).

- ☐ **Avoid Late-Night Eating or Stress:** Finish meals 2–3 hours before bed.
 - ☐ **Morning Light Exposure:** Get natural light within 30 minutes of waking to reset cortisol curve.
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Stress Management

Directly calm the nervous system to reduce cortisol output.

- ☐ **Deep Breathing/Box Breathing:** 4 seconds inhale, 4 hold, 4 exhale, 4 hold—repeat 5 minutes.
 - ☐ **Grounding Practices:** Journaling, prayer, meditation, nature walks, cold water on face.
 - ☐ **Nervous System “Pauses”:** Rest breaks during day, especially afternoon slumps.
 - ☐ **Limit Multitasking & Overstimulation:** Simplify schedules, protect quiet time.
 - ☐ **Emotional Regulation:** Therapy, somatic practices, EFT tapping, or guided relaxation.
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Community & Connection

Connection is a biological buffer against cortisol.

- ☐ **Social Support:** Regular check-ins with trusted friends or loved ones.

- ☐ **Physical Affection:** Hugs, cuddling, forehead touch—oxytocin lowers cortisol.
- ☐ **Laughter & Play:** Engaging in fun, hobbies, creativity.
- ☐ **Purpose & Belonging:** Involvement in faith communities, group activities, mentorship.
- ☐ **Service & Gratitude:** Helping others reduces stress hormones and boosts well-being.

Cortisol balance doesn't happen overnight—it's the result of consistent choices that soothe the nervous system and nourish the body. By following this checklist, you are actively supporting your cortisol detox, rebuilding resilience, and creating conditions for deep healing. Small steps practiced daily lead to transformational outcomes. Stay gentle, stay consistent, and trust your healing process to cortisol detox success. Happy trails on your wellness journey!