Adrenal Health In Kids: Uncovering The Hidden Link To Well-Being Transcript

(Transcripts are generated by AI and may contain errors)

Introduction and guest background

Welcome back to ADHD, Autism and Chronic Disease Parenting Summit. I'm here with a fantastic practitioner, Doctor Bradley Campbell, one of my favorite integrative practitioners.

Follow him online. Has one of the best accounts, you know, when it's not getting shut down. But it has been a while, which is very excellent. And he's also the author of do I Have Adrenal Fatigue?

And we're gonna be talking about adrenals today. Thank you so much for being here, and I'm super excited to chat with you today. Yeah, thanks for having me on, doc. I really appreciate it.

So let's just start with the adrenals. I mean, I mentioned that term. I don't know if everybody exactly knows what that is. I think we probably heard of it before.

Maybe you've heard of adrenal fatigue, but let's just talk very basic first about what the adrenals are and why they're important or relevant or even why you want to talk about it, write a book on it.

I mean, that's a big topic. So yeah, it is. So I well, I decide to write a book on it because there hadn't been a really great book for like 20 years that came out.

But what it is is it's a hormone gland and it's adrenal, which is on top of the renal gland, which it's based like a little party hat on top of your kidney, which is your renal gland.

So it's this little tiny triangular organ that's really important.

What the adrenals do

It sits right on top of your kidneys, and it manages the four S's or the four S hormones. I break it down into salt, sex, sugar and stress hormones, all of which are very important.

And adrenals is also where the word adrenaline comes from. So other people can be like, oh, it's adrenal on top of the kidneys, but it's also adrenal because it regulates the stress and adrenaline hormones.

So bring it down to like very general public lay people terms. It basically manages salt and blood pressure with aldosterone. It manages stress hormones with cortisol and adrenaline.

Epinephrine those type of hormones it manages some sugar balance with through the cortisol system as well. And it also helps and like some of your sugar and energy circuits.

And it also manages different sex hormones like DHEA, which is a precursor to testosterone, and other sex hormones, which are important for bone density and libido and, proper development for kids through puberty.

Yeah. And, you know, just hearing you talk about that, I mean, if you really just step back and think about it, it does make sense that the adrenals are probably a big factor in what's going on these days. One, because we have way too much stress.

Everybody has more stress than ever to, you know, we're eating more sugar and you know, it has some sugar balance regulation. So that that's probably an issue.

And then three, we're we're exposed to so many toxins and chemicals and all sorts of, neuro endocrine disruptors and things like that. So you're basically assaulting the adrenals these days, and it's no wonder that they're not

working properly.

Yeah, pretty much like I joke with my patients all the time. Like, the good news is we know what to do. The bad news is you're doing everything wrong, especially when they're new.

And most Americans are kind of just doing a lot of wrong things. Like you said, they're like under sleeping and or under resting, overworking, either under eating or over eating and usually over drugging themselves with like caffeine, alcohol, marijuana of some sort to kind of numb out and to cope.

So I think, the adrenals get a lot of stress from caffeine and lack of sleep, too much sugar, too much or too little salt.

How stress and modern life affect adrenal health

So it's no wonder that everyone seems to have some sort of adrenal or hormonal issue, because the adrenals are just one part of the HPA axis, or your whole basal like brain, thyroid, adrenal axis, and they all play a role.

It's like an orchestra or a symphony where every instrument matters and every hormonal gland matters, and they're all working in harmony together. But the adrenals are pretty important.

It's kind of like your violin section of the orchestra. Without that, it would be pretty lame to listen to. And your life feels kind of lame, too, when your adrenals are pretty fatigued.

Exactly. And this is something that I feel like has gotten a little bit more discussion in the adult world, and certainly not enough, but I definitely have heard it more, but almost, you know, not really discussed at all in pediatrics.

And that's why I really I'm excited to chat with you a little bit more about this topic today, because I don't feel like it's really explored in the pediatric world, though I would imagine it is a huge factor in what we're seeing these days.

And especially given, you know, that, like, kids have 50% chronic disease rates, it's getting worse and worse. We're seeing all sorts of conditions that we never saw before.

Then you're talking about, you know, adrenal fatigue in adults. Well, that's probably also going on in kids that might not be quite to the same level.

And maybe they're a little bit more resilient. But we're we are damaging the adrenals. We're assaulting the adrenals, we're overworking the adrenals. And they were never meant to do what what they are doing.

So I would imagine that that's a big part of what's going on in conjunction with all the other things that you said, like the brain and the thyroid, these all these are all connected.

So you can't really separate out and be like, oh, it's just an adrenal problem unless you have some sort of, you know, autoimmune adrenal thing, then it's usually everything's connected totally.

And a lot of times with kids we see the adrenal symptoms show up first in the brain, whether it's like fatigue or some moodiness or irritability, or they come home and some of the anxiety comes out like they're good at school first, and then they're usually rough at home.

That's usually one of the first signs is you're like, I see, like sleeps off, they're craving sugar, or they're usually getting more emotional at home first, and they're generally just overstimulated.

They're getting too much adrenaline from screens and stimulation, and kids are not allowed to be bored enough without screens. And that's one of the main things I see in my patient population.

So what do you see in terms of the stages? You kind of mentioned some of the first things. So what what would we

be looking for for parents to start to clue in that maybe the adrenals are something they should even be thinking about or discussing with their practitioners.

Yeah. So there's really three stages of adrenal fatigue.

Adrenal fatigue signs in kids

So from like really healthy perfect adrenals maybe stage zero. You get the stage one, the first stage, which is the first sign of dysfunction. That's basically overactive adrenal stage.

And you start getting more hyper adrenal state where maybe the kid has a little, hyperactivity. Maybe they're starting to get some sleep issues where they can't go to bed quickly at night.

Maybe they're just sort of constantly addicted to different sugar or different stimulants or food dyes or candy. They might start having, over a prolonged period and they might start getting like a lot of cracking of their joints or knuckles or their back or neck just crack really easily.

Cracking your knuckles, sort of a sign of just general stress relief. But when they start, like hearing, clicking, popping joints, that's often from high cortisol and adrenal output, creating ligament laxity.

And I start to see that. Yeah, those and the craving for sugar first. The second stage kind of gets more into wired and tired. So instead of just being hyper and stage one, stage two is up and down where they might be more burnt out after school.

That typically hits more into middle school, high school where they kind of need to sleep a lot more. They might start getting sick more often. They and this even does happen, unfortunately, now with younger kids in middle and high school.

But some of the acts of our psoriasis where they're starting to get low cortisol issues because what do you give for Christmas rises? Steroids is one of the main go tos, but if your adrenal glands are working really well, you don't really get asthma.

You don't really get eczema psoriasis most of the time, because your adrenals can make enough natural steroids to fix the issue. So and adrenaline. Adrenergic receptor medications are one of the common inhalers for asthma.

So the second stage is usually either like asthma chronic illness infection. They might have some occasional like pains or joint aches or pains, maybe some flat feet.

They might but flat feet is kind of stage three. So then after the wired and tired where they're starting to crave salt and sugar, their sleep or their energy is off, their mood might be starting to get more dysregulated at that point.

Then you get into stage three, which is more of the burnout. Just they're not wired entire. There's completely tired. They might not. They might have trouble sleeping, falling asleep and or staying asleep.

They wake up not hungry. That's a big one for stage two. Going into stage three is that you wake up and you're not hungry for breakfast. They're just going to munch all the time or they're not resting enough, and so they're not hungry. When they get up first thing in the morning, they start getting really flat feet.

They might bruise easily. They're getting more, common infections. Maybe their nails start getting weaker, ridged. They might crave sugar or caffeine or tea even at a young age to get through the day.

They might be getting some afternoon fatigue, yawning, headaches, hard time focusing. Especially if they're not having a big enough lunch or even if they're having, like, more fatigue from lunch, that can be another sign.

You can even start seeing scoliosis and poor handwriting. And sometimes urination issues because of the kidney

adrenal link. They might start, having to go to the bathroom more often or having some bedwetting signs at that point.

Anyway, that's a that's a great list. And I think a lot of these things people do find in their kids. So then, you know, if you are thinking that this is something that's going on, then what kind of tests would you do or what would you do for kids?

I know there there's certainly adrenal testing you can do in adults, and some of it you could do for kids, though it's not probably really tested a lot in kids.

Or you could use it. And blood work always. You know, we want to do as minimal blood work as we can. For kids. So I'm curious, you know, in your practice, what are the different things that you, you might use?

And then what do you suggest in terms for families especially, they go to a regular doctor who wouldn't really do adrenal testing. Yes. So there are some urine and saliva testing for kids.

There's like a Dutch test you can use for kids. I usually use the saliva test kits about half the cost of the Dutch test. But you basically have them, like spit for 4 or 5 times a day if you want to be sure that's what's going on.

That's one of the ways you can kind of tell is see where their cortisol and adrenal hormones are throughout the day. So they spit in a tube or through the urine test.

Testing and practical ways to assess adrenal issues

They pee on a little piece of paper we send into a lab, and a few days later they'll tell you where the kid is in kind of like stage one, two or 3 or 0 of having adrenal issues.

But there are some, symptom quizzes. I put it in my book. The do I have adrenal fatigue? There's also, a bunch of different practitioners you can see who can do some hands on testing to see what's going on, and they'll do either some biofeedback or muscle testing, or there are also practitioners that will do just hands on exam testing, like if you push at the track or lumbar junction and there's some tenderness there that could be a sign, real golf sign of some adrenal fatigue.

One of the main ones, though, that's very easy for people to do, is to actually shine a light in the eye. So go in a fairly dark room. This is more of a midbrain brain side of being kind of like routinely stressed, but does relate to the adrenals too.

But what you do is you look at the black part of the eye, the people, and it should be bigger in a dark room. And you take a flashlight on your phone or any light shining in the eye, and if the pupil shrinks and then opens back up within a second or two or starts oscillating big close, that might mean that of that the brain and body is under some sort of either brain or adrenal distress.

So your eyes should. The black part should get small for about 4 to 5 seconds and hold that sometimes even longer. But if it gets small and then opens right back up, that's another sign that the brain and the hormonal system might be having some issues.

So that's that's really practical and helpful. And, you know, going from there, I would say, you know, everybody should work with somebody like you or you, you know, if they for this, I think pretty much every everybody has some sort of adrenal fatigue at this point.

But that's probably not practical. You know, for everybody to work, work with a practitioner. And I think it's fairly safe to assume at this point that almost any normal child in modern Western society has some sort of adrenal fatigue, some sort of stress.

I mean, it might not be at stage, you know, three or whatever, but you might almost certainly be at the beginning

stages of it where we're, you know, want to have too much on social media, too much.

We're watching the news, too much stress at school, too much homework, whatever it is. I mean, I think everybody could use a little bit of a of a detoxification and just really being more mindful, about their, their stress levels and adrenals.

So for somebody who just wants to get started, maybe the symptoms are not terrible, but they they've heard a bunch of stuff here and like yeah, that does sound like my teenager.

What what are some of the things that that they could, could start with. And obviously with the caveat that nothing, you know, replaces working with a practitioner or doing something one on one and really figuring out what makes the most sense for you.

Foundational support for adrenal health

But there are a lot of things that you can probably do in general to help your overall health, and that's going to help your adrenal health. So let's let's chat about that for a second for sure.

The because if we go back to the salt sugar stress hormone part, the biggest thing is kind of doing whatever you have in your toolbox to work on stress.

So maybe that's getting the kid more some counseling at school or at home, maybe just having some emotional, open communication with them about how they're feeling or what might be stressed, the amount and not trying to fix it.

But just like holding space for them to be, to talk about their feelings and emotions, that's big. Sleep is a big one. That's probably the fifth ask that's not on there.

But having regular sleep and sleep hygiene is very important. Trying to minimize screen time or just reduce it. You don't have to cut it out completely, but reducing it, especially reducing it the half hour or hour before bed is very important.

And balancing sugar. So less simple sugars, less added sugars, less simple carbohydrates for breakfast, more fruits, veggies, healthy fats and protein.

The more healthy fat and protein you can get in that starts to stabilize the adrenals as well as occasional snacks. Because some of these kids, their blood sugar when their adrenals are off, or it's kind of going up and down in a rollercoaster all day.

So if you can get some healthy snacks in with maybe like some apple with some nut butters or some, hummus or guacamole or whatever, healthy options you get in to get a little healthy fat and protein with some either fruits or veggies or nuts and seeds or meats, eggs, fish.

That's all going to help stabilize their adrenals and their blood sugar throughout the day, because one of the biggest stresses on the adrenals is an unstable blood sugar.

So that's helpful. As well as, there are some different vitamins that are helpful as well. So you can ask your practitioner about, b-complex. For kids, a magnesium supplement is helpful to relax the adrenals.

Different vitamin C sources I prefer in food through fruit, but vitamin C sources can also help. The adrenals are the number one most constant traded place of vitamin C inside of your body in the adrenal cortex.

And there's also a supplement that's fairly straightforward, for depleted adrenals because practitioners will use adrenal gland fillers, but they're a little bit stronger stimulation.

Whereas there's a really gentle supplement that works for kids and adults. That's a GMO therapy, which is, a the bud or seed of a plant. So the blackcurrant seed bud is called ribose negra rib is nigra by under under.

And it's like a little dropper bottle. It tastes fairly good. You can mix it with like any type of juice or water. And that over time is also something to ask your practitioner about because that usually will start unifying and rebuilding the adrenal glands as well, which is pretty easy.

But that's very again, practical advice. And any smart practitioner that I talk to, an integrative world will say the same thing, you know, and it's so nice to hear.

But it's it's there are so many things that you can do from that, you know, basic foundational perspective. Everyone has their own mnemonics. For me, in my book, it's the seeds of health, stress, environmental toxins, exercise, diet and sleep.

But it's always basically the same. The same things. You know, they're all saying that we have, whether it's the acids or the you know, I've heard all different ones.

But at the end of the day, for the most part, you don't need fancy tests, you don't need a big supplement regimen. You just need to focus on decreasing your stress a little bit, eating a little earlier and a little more exercise that's going to get you most of the way.

And then if you do those things and you're still not, then that's when you work with a practitioner like you who can dive a little bit deeper. Because certainly there are, you know, worse issues, worse problems, things that, you know, might be mixed with other things.

And so we need to kind of untangle that and work our way forward. But regardless, you're never going to go wrong with eating a little healthier, right?

Right. Yeah. Never going to go wrong with the basics. The seeds of health. The exercise is big. I guess the last thing I forgot to mention was sunlight, too.

I guess it's another aspect. Seeds assistance, but sunlight? First morning sun. Or, like, getting your kids outside, for sunrise and or sunset and then sleep issues.

One of my secret hacks is getting them out for to, like, go watch the stars or the moon. Even just for like a half hour. That can help reset some of their melatonin circadian rhythms and their adrenal cortisol awakening rhythm for sleep and wake.

So, just getting outside more is always beneficial. Definitely. And to to leave parents with one final thought. If if you were to have a family come in and they would ask you what is the most important thing that they could do to get their adrenals back on track if they were going to do one thing today or this week, what would be the number one thing that you would say?

Obviously there's lots of things, but if you were like, let's do this today, I want you to do one thing. What would it be? That thing.

Best first step: rest and reducing caffeine

Oh man, it's going to be. It would probably be making sure you're resting enough. So the Chinese used to use the golden ratio of, 1 to 1.4, but it's basically 15 hours of activity, nine hours of rest a day.

So whether that's sleep or other downtime, that's what it should be day to day. But when you're sick or when you're struggling with something, you flip it and you get 15 hours of rest and nine hours of activities.

Whether it's sleep, meditation, the way you eat, the way you go about your day can be more restful or more

draining. So trying to have as much time during the day of de-stressing, of resting and recharging is extremely helpful.

The one caveat is, if you're on caffeine, you gotta get off the caffeine, or at least down below like ten 20mg a day, or it's going to be really hard to get the adrenals better.

It's like trying to fix cavities while you're sucking on Starburst all day. So the caffeine thing is huge. Now, and especially in kids. And you know, we don't think about it, but there are a lot of kids drinking coffee or having a lot of tea or caffeinated drinks.

I mean, maybe not as much coffee and some of the younger kids, but they're having food or drinks that have a lot of more drinks that have caffeine in it for kids, which is crazy.

I mean, you don't need your 12 year old. They shouldn't be doing that for school. Now, and especially if they're having anxiety or panic attacks or high adrenaline induced issues.

You don't need liquid adrenaline while you have a mental health issue most of the time. Ask well, well. Thank you for sharing your wisdom. This is a super interesting topic.

Very practical, very relevant. I think every single family watching this, whether it's for yourself or for your kids, I think we can be thinking about our adrenals more and making some simple changes to it to decrease our stress and get our adrenals a little bit healthier.

And if we do that, that's part of the bigger picture here. And one of the major reasons when things start to get off, that's what leads us to chronic disease.

The adrenals are a big part of that. With the thyroid and the brain and the gut, they're all connected, but they all get off on a different path. And that's where we lead to chronic disease.

But if you want to get back on to a healthier path and these are the things we need to be thinking about. So maybe you can tell people a little bit again, where to find you, your website, socials, all that.

Yeah. Yeah. Can find me at Dr.. Doctor Bradley campbell.

Where to find Dr. Campbell and closing remarks

com, and I have the same Instagram and social media handles. Dr.. Bradley Campbell Campbell like the soup. And, the book I have is on Amazon. Do I have adrenal fatigue?

Doctor Bradley Campbell? Yeah. It's been great talking with you I appreciate it. Awesome. Well, thanks for chatting with you. I always love chatting with you online.

You have one of the best social media accounts that there is. And I kind of joked about it before, but I'm I'm glad to see that you haven't been kicked off in a while.

You grew again real fast. So people really love, all the content that you're putting out there, the dog videos in your car, chatted about life. So it's, It's a pleasure.

Thanks for being here. Thank you for having.