

## Louise's Healthy Nutrition Hints

### ✓ **BE Proactive: A 2 Part Series examining Stress** **Part 1 - The Food Defense**

Let's face it; we all have stress in our lives. Many people believe this is due to too much work and not enough down time. But, the truth is, it goes much deeper than that. According to Brendan Brazier, Canadian triathlete and author of the Thrive book series, people experience two types of stress, complementary and uncomplementary. With complementary stress, you can reap benefits. For example, when an athlete prepares for a race, there is a physical stress of breaking down body tissues, but, in the end, the athlete is stronger and better fit. Another example of complementary stress happens when you are in the throes of a project at work that requires extra hours and energy. The benefit becomes the satisfaction of an end product or an achievement for your efforts.

Uncomplementary stress is not beneficial, emotionally or physically. This stress causes elevated levels of cortisol (your stress hormone) that stick around for longer periods and are the root cause of many diseases and health ailments. Cortisol raises your blood sugar; excess blood sugar gets converted to fat, primarily in the belly area. So, stressed people generally do not burn body fat as efficiently as those who can manage or reduce their stress. Common ailments associated with stress are weight gain or the inability to lose weight even though you may be exercising, late night food cravings especially for starchy or sweet foods, fatigue, poor digestion and trouble sleeping.

One way to reduce uncomplimentary stress is to add more alkaline- forming foods into your diet. This helps restore overall balance and combat those other unwanted stressors. Alkaline forming foods are predominantly fruit and vegetables, especially food with the presence of chlorophyll- so the greener the better. Another alkaline food is lemons, though acidic outside the body they are actually alkaline forming in the body. Acid forming foods are processed or refined foods, as well as some dairy, grains and animal meats. When you consume too many acid forming foods, you put your body under more undue stress in order to maintain its ideal pH. This extra stress causes your cortisol levels to rise and will also make you more prone to fatigue, while at the same time, impairing your sleep. That is not to say you should eliminate acidic all foods. Your body needs both. The ideal balance is 80 % alkaline to 20% acidic.

No human has yet been able to live a life free of stress. What is in your arsenal, however, is choice. Every day, at every meal, you can choose the foods that will reduce the impact stress has on your body. Knowing you are doing something positive for yourself helps take the stress out of stress!