

# ADDISON'S DISEASE

HEAL Information Sheet  
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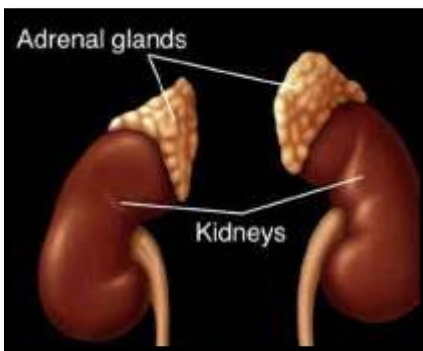
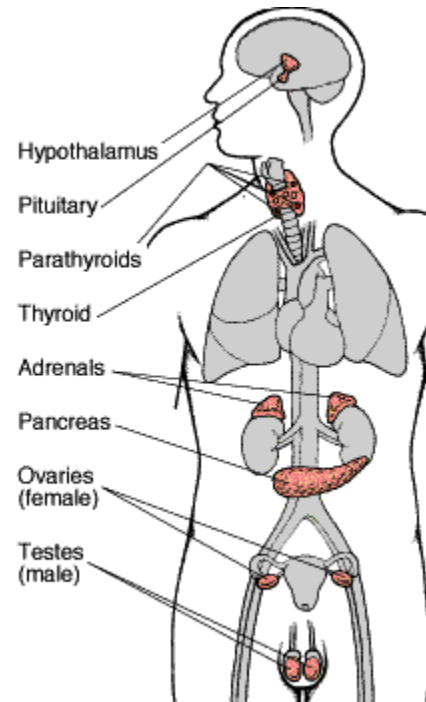
## Definition:

When a person's adrenal glands become so exhausted that they simply do not function anymore, the condition is called Addison's disease, which is a terminal disease.

## Symptoms:

It is characterized by blotchy pigment appearing suddenly on large parts of the body, intolerance to heat or cold, reduction in capacity for muscular work, weakness, inability to stand any stress or emotional excitement, whether positive or negative, sometimes nervous breakdown or even insanity, complete exhaustion, feeling that one is going to die, inability to digest food, and other similar symptoms.

In 1855, Thomas Addison described a disorder of the suprarenal capsules, or the adrenal glands. He had the dubious honor of having the disease bear his name to this day in history. Herewith shall be presented a capsulation of the symptoms of chronic adrenal deficiency according to Ivor H. Mills, M.A., Ph.D., M.D., and F.R.C.P. and one of Great Britain's experts on adrenal function:



"The adrenal in this disease suffers from destruction by tuberculosis or progressive atrophy or, very rarely, destruction by secondary carcinoma [cancer] ... most common presenting symptom is tiredness. . . "worn out" but healthy people... loss of weight ... slowly and is not usually gross. . . gastrointestinal upset is not uncommon ... severity depends upon the degree of steroid deficiency... may have no such symptoms of gastrointestinal upset until he gets acute infection ... anorexia, vomiting and occasional diarrhoea... vague abdominal pain ... steatorrhoea [increase fecal fat excretion] to the extent of

30 gm. fat per day, without diarrhea...

Pigmentation is a striking feature of the patient with advanced Addison's disease ... widespread on trunk, face, arms, and extends to the creases of the hands and the mucous membranes of the mouth ... tan of a previous summer did not fade during the winter ... even in Negroes. Palmar pigmentation has increased... tendency for the blood pressure to be low .... Vascular reflex responses to the fall in pressure are impaired. The periphery (hands, nose, and ears) of such a patient may be warm when the systolic pressure has fallen below 100 mm Hg whereas a person with normal adrenals would usually show peripheral constriction with a fall in arterial pressure....



### **Addison's disease:**

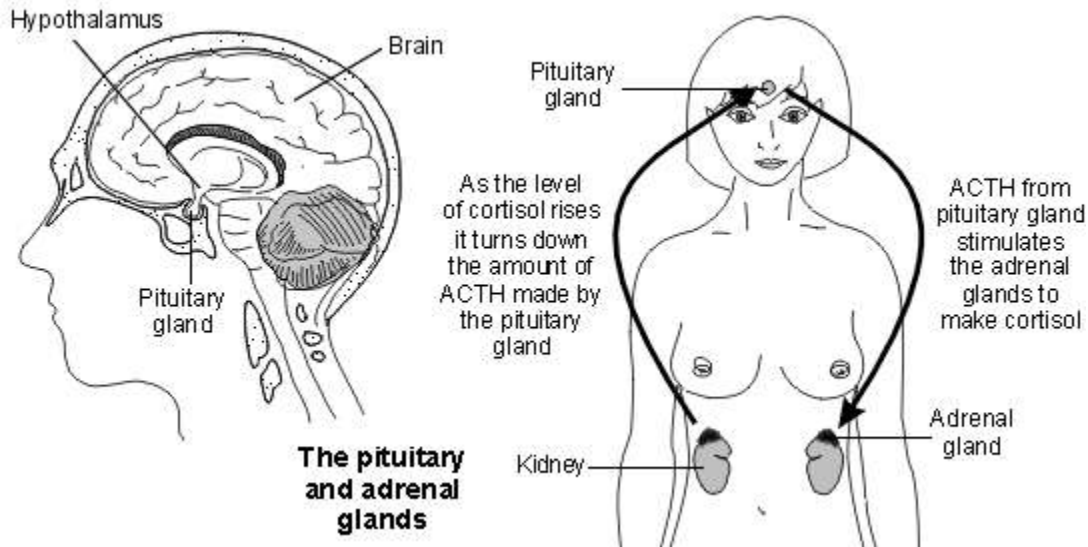


- Note the generalised skin pigmentation (in a Caucasian patient) but especially the deposition in the palmer skin creases, nails and gums.

- She was treated many years ago for pulmonary TB. What are the other causes of this condition?

Hypoglycemia... does occasionally occur... They may suffer hypoglycemic symptoms some hours after a large carbohydrate meal but usually their anorexia prevents them from consuming sufficient carbohydrate to do this...

- In women of child-bearing age, some disturbance of the menstrual rhythm is occasionally seen....
- loss of pubic and axillary hair is a very useful physical sign ...
- Impotence is rare but loss of interest in sexual activity is not uncommon ...
- Nocturia (night urination) is common in patients with chronic adrenal deficiency, because of the impairment of their handling of a water load....
- mild neurotic traits to gross psychosis ...
- depression, schizophrenia, and hallucinations....
- Severe headache ... resemble/s/ patients with raised intra cranial pressure, but the blood pressure remains low and the pulse rate does not slow....
- An X-Ray of the chest may reveal the small heart frequently seen in chronic adrenal deficiency....
- A straight X-ray of the abdomen may reveal calcification above the kidneys if the adrenals have been destroyed by tuberculosis ...
- sodium and chloride are low or in the lower half of the normal range....
- blood urea frequently raised...
- a low fasting blood sugar....
- Low adrenal steroid excretion...



ACTH test is usually used to confirm adrenal deficiency: if no increase of steroid hormone is noted in the urine after two to four days of intravenous administration of ACTH, then adrenal deficiency is suspected rather than other diseases such as Steatorrhoea, Crohn's disease (regional ileitis), Cirrhosis of the liver, Slat losing renal disease, Leukemia, Anorexia nervosa, and chronic thyrotoxicosis."

The special requirements of pregnancy, surgery, diabetes, and hypoparathyroidism complicate Addison's disease even more. In addition to Addison's disease there is hypopituitarism which is a deficiency of pituitary thyroid stimulating hormone, and can result in loss of pigmentation, and also in water intoxication because of the prevention of the steady drain of sodium into the urine. This may exhibit itself as confusion and disorientation, epileptic fits, hypothermia, and even coma. There is also depressed thyroid function: sensitivity to cold, slowness in mental and physical activities, loss of sexual libido, absence of menstruation in women and impotence in men. "In children, arrest of growth hormone occurs."

#### Herbal Aids:

**Licorice:** Licorice is excellent to use in this condition, as it contains a cortisone-type substance which will help the body restore itself to the point where it will produce its own cortisone. Its sugar-like substance does not increase the demand for insulin in the body, thus giving strength without bringing on insulin shock. LaDean Griffin explains that she is certain that this works, because at a time when she thought she was making a great deal of personal progress, a sudden shock debilitated her so much that she developed Addison's Disease. She found that two capsules of Licorice each day would give her enough strength to begin healing, and to do the day's work. She needed to continue taking the herb, which is not addictive, she explained, no more than food is. You can stop taking the Licorice root without going into shock as you would if you suddenly stopped taking cortisone, she explained.

