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Cruxpoint Health Breakthrough, Inc.

Elevated Cortisol & Weight Gain

Chronically elevated cortisol can contribute to weight gain, especially around the abdomen.

What Cortisol Does

Cortisol is a stress hormone produced by your adrenal glands. It helps regulate metabolism, blood sugar, and the body's stress response. Short-term increases (like during exercise or acute stress) are normal and beneficial. Problems arise when cortisol remains elevated for long periods.

Mechanisms Linking Cortisol to Weight Gain

1. Increased Appetite & Cravings — High cortisol stimulates appetite and can increase cravings for high-fat, high-sugar foods — “comfort eating.”
2. Fat Storage in the Abdomen — Cortisol promotes the storage of visceral fat (fat around internal organs), which is metabolically active and linked to insulin resistance, heart disease, and inflammation.
3. Muscle Breakdown — Chronically elevated cortisol breaks down muscle tissue to release glucose for energy, reducing lean muscle mass and lowering overall metabolic rate.
4. Insulin Resistance — High cortisol increases blood sugar and insulin levels over time, making it easier for your body to store fat and harder to burn it.
5. Sleep Disruption — Elevated cortisol can interfere with sleep, and poor sleep itself further elevates cortisol and creates “carb hunger” — creating a vicious cycle that favors weight gain.

When Cortisol Is a Problem

Chronic stress, poor sleep, overtraining, or conditions like Cushing's syndrome can lead to persistently high cortisol. Psychological stress or long work hours can sustain elevated levels.

What Helps

- Regular exercise (HIIT, moderate and intense aerobic, and strength training)
- Adequate sleep (7–9 hours)
- Stress-reduction techniques (meditation, breathing, nature time)
- Balanced meals with protein, fat, and fiber to stabilize blood sugar