



Friends and family.

I have adrenal insufficiency, (AI) and I'd like to share some information about it with you.

Adrenal insufficiency happens when the body can't make cortisol, a hormone necessary for life (Similar to a diabetic, a person with AI must have cortisol the same way a diabetic must have insulin).

AI is a life-long condition that requires careful management. Cortisol affects my blood pressure, heart rate, and energy levels. When a healthy person does anything requiring extra energy, such as physical exercise, an intense argument with their partner, or has an acute illness/infection, their body naturally produces more cortisol. I must take cortisol through medication. I have no meter to tell me when I need more cortisol. Thus, I must be able to recognize early symptoms. Sometimes my cortisol gets low unexpectedly. When that happens, I must rest and take more medication. Rest for me means no stress and quiet time until I recover. I avoid going out when I'm sick. If I push myself too far or don't seek treatment for a medical issue, it can lead to an adrenal crisis and a trip to the emergency room. I must learn to manage this illness so I can enjoy life.

When people only see me at my best, they might think I'm faking it. Adrenal insufficiency and Adrenal Fatigue are often confused. AI is a serious medical condition that requires management by specialized professionals. It is diagnosed through lab testing. Adrenal Fatigue is a term used by alternative medical providers to define a group of symptoms. Because it has not been researched and no lab testing parameters have been set, it is not recognized by the conventional medical community.

It's important to me to be heard by the people around me. AI patients are often dismissed as exaggerating by those who misunderstand our condition. If I say I need something specific, please respond quickly.

Time is of the essence in the lead-up to a crisis. If I can rely on you, we can get through it smoothly. There are small ways you can help me conserve energy and avoid an adrenal crisis. Sometimes I ignore early warning signs that I need more medication. A few signs of low cortisol are confusion, weakness, extreme nausea, and appearing drunk. Each person is different. **My early signs of low cortisol are:**

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____

If you notice that I'm experiencing these symptoms please ask me if I need more medication, electrolytes, or food. If you ever find me unable to respond, call for an ambulance immediately!

Because of the nature of cortisol, emotional stress can lead to illness for me. If we have a disagreement that becomes emotional, I may need to step back from it until we can discuss it calmly. Please understand this is a very real response to stress by my body. I can't control it.

Adrenal insufficiency is unpredictable. It's hard for me to promise I will be somewhere on a future date when I may wake up sick that day. Limited energy means I may not be able to attend events. Please know this is frustrating for me too. Although the way we spend time together may change, I hope this is an opportunity for us to grow closer. There are many ways we can connect in spite of my illness. A quick message to say "Hi" is always welcome. We could share a meal, listen to music, go for a drive, watch a movie, listen to a podcast, or sit in the park.

My favorite thing to do with you is _____.

Thank you for reading this. I hope we can find a way to continue enjoying time together. I'm ready to answer any questions you have about adrenal insufficiency.