

If you've been training for some time, you've probably found that you experience a surge in growth whenever you change your training programme. Now, exciting new research shows that changing your diet according to the season could also help you get better results.

You might be aware that Cortisol is a major catabolic hormone. Secreted by the adrenal gland, one of the roles of Cortisol is to break down muscle tissue and burn it for energy. Even worse, high levels of Cortisol have been linked with an increase in abdominal fat. In short, if you're training to lose fat and build muscle, a lot of Cortisol is not a good thing. Like most hormones, Cortisol levels vary throughout the day. However, most people don't know that Cortisol levels change according to the season. A recent study published in the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism showed that Cortisol is higher in the winter months. Because Cortisol also weakens your immune system, these findings could explain why you're more likely to get ill during the winter. Why does Cortisol increase during the winter? Although scientists aren't sure why, it appears that the darker days may have a role to play. People suffering from Seasonal Affective Disorder (a type of depression that occurs mostly during winter) show higher Cortisol levels. Treatment with light therapy tends to improve their mood and reduce Cortisol levels. Aside from light therapy, what steps can you take to lower your Cortisol levels during the winter?

- 1) Ensure that you're getting enough carbohydrate. Diets that restrict carbohydrate lead to an increase in Cortisol levels. Ensure that your carbohydrate intake provides at least 40% of your total calories. (Maybe try switching to green Max-Meal or Progain)
- 2) Take a carbohydrate drink (such as Viper) during training. Following your workout, Cortisol levels tend to rise dramatically. However, studies have shown that consuming a carbohydrate drink when you're training can block the release of Cortisol.
- 3) Take a carbohydrate and protein drink immediately after exercise (such as Recover.) When you finish training, your body needs nutrients in order to build new muscle. Numerous studies have shown that a post-workout protein and carbohydrate supplement can increase growth hormone levels, boost glycogen stores and speed up muscle growth. Moreover, they can also minimise Cortisol levels ♦ which means more muscle growth, faster recovery and less chance of an illness or infection interfering with your training.
- 4) If you are one of those individuals that seem to suffer from stress more than others, through work or home, you are probably wasting a lot of muscle tissue. Try using a supplement specifically designed to lower Cortisol levels, such as Stress Buster. Stress Buster uses both Phosphatidylserine and 7-Keto♦, which have been shown in several clinical trials to reduce Cortisol levels. Even better, 7-Keto♦ has been shown to reduce body fat by increasing thyroid levels, which is responsible for increasing your metabolic rate. So, not only does Stress Buster keep your Cortisol levels under control, it's also a highly effective way to keep your body fat under control!