ForeWord Reviews

HEALTH & FITNESS

Mastering Cortisol: Stop Your Body's Stress Hormone from Making You Fat Around the Middle

Marilyn Glenville
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“Maybe your skirts are too tight,” suggests the author, “your blouse gapes and a ‘muffin top’ layer of fat pours over the waistband of your jeans.” Glenville asserts that there’s more at stake than looks: “the fat around your middle can also be dangerous. It increases the risk of heart disease, diabetes, stroke, cancer, and high blood pressure.”

Glenville has studied nutrition and women’s health for more than twenty-five years in England, with the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Surgeons. Her previous health books include *Natural Alternatives to Dieting* and *Overcoming PMS the Natural Way*.

Here, she explains, in accessible language, the mind-body connection that causes buildup of midsection fat: stress triggers a “fight-or-flight” response, preparing the body for anticipated battle by releasing the stress hormones adrenaline (which increases alertness) and cortisol (which causes storage of fat and sugar). “To continue providing the energy it thinks you need, the body needs to keep a convenient fat store ready for constant use,” Glenville explains. “It also creates cravings and increases appetite.”

Charts, sidebars, and diagrams—such as instructions for calculating the Body-Mass Index and identifying stress—complement the clear text, helping readers digest the science behind Glenville’s recommendations. In the long chapter “What and How to Eat,” she explains that cutting calories makes the body think there is famine, causing stress, slowing metabolism, fluctuating blood sugar levels, and releasing stress hormones, all of which causes the body to accumulate fat. She offers “simple dietary tricks to teach your body to burn fat rather than store it,” like eating small, frequent meals, increasing protein, and eliminating sugar. She discusses which foods and supplements to take (like whole grains, fish, water, and certain vitamins and minerals) and which to avoid (like milk, caffeine, sugar, and white bread). She details how these dietary changes alter body shape and lead to better appearance and health.

In addition to new eating habits, stress reduction is essential, emphasizes Glenville, and she offers relaxation techniques and strategies to ensure a good night’s sleep. Finally, she

provides a "'Lose-Your-Belly' (and 'Find-Your-Waist') Plan of Action" and suggestions for "Staying Slim and Healthy," with meal plans and exercise regimens for long-term slenderness and health.

Mastering Cortisol was first published in England as *Fat Around the Middle*. The author could have better prepared her useful book for U.S. publication by changing references and measurements more consistently to American standards, and citing studies from outside the U.K.

"The choice is yours," admonishes the author. Following her plan, she says, "within three months you will have completely changed your body shape … and reduced the risk of life-threatening illnesses."