

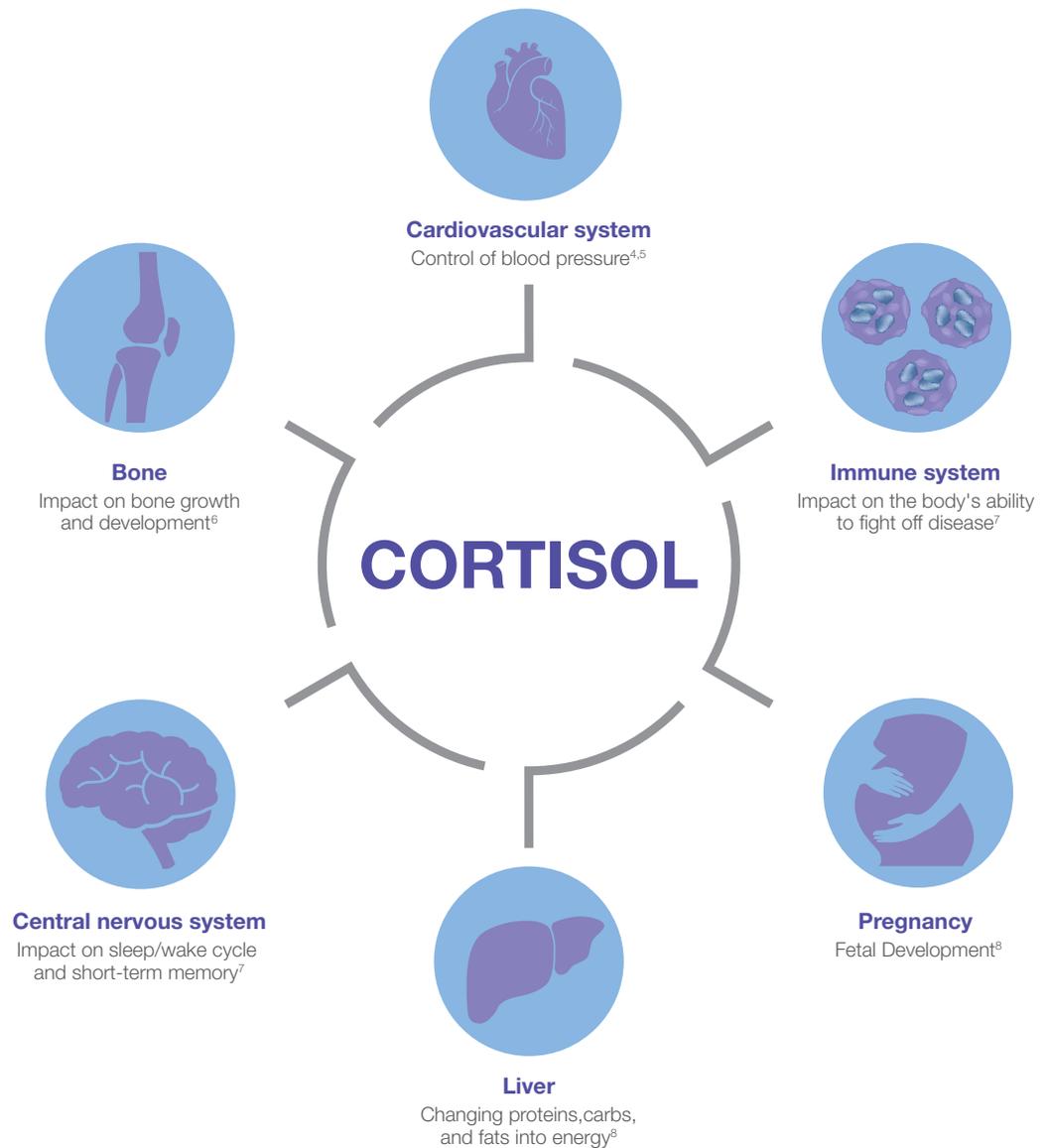
What Is Hypercortisolism?

Hypercortisolism is caused when your body is exposed to an excess amount of a hormone called **cortisol**.¹ Hypercortisolism may also be referred to as Cushing Syndrome.²

What is cortisol?

Cortisol is a hormone that is naturally produced by your body in the adrenal glands, which are located at the top of the kidneys. Cortisol plays a role in many body functions.³

THE EFFECT OF CORTISOL ON THE BODY



Because cortisol has such an important impact on your body, persistently elevated levels can have many negative implications.⁸

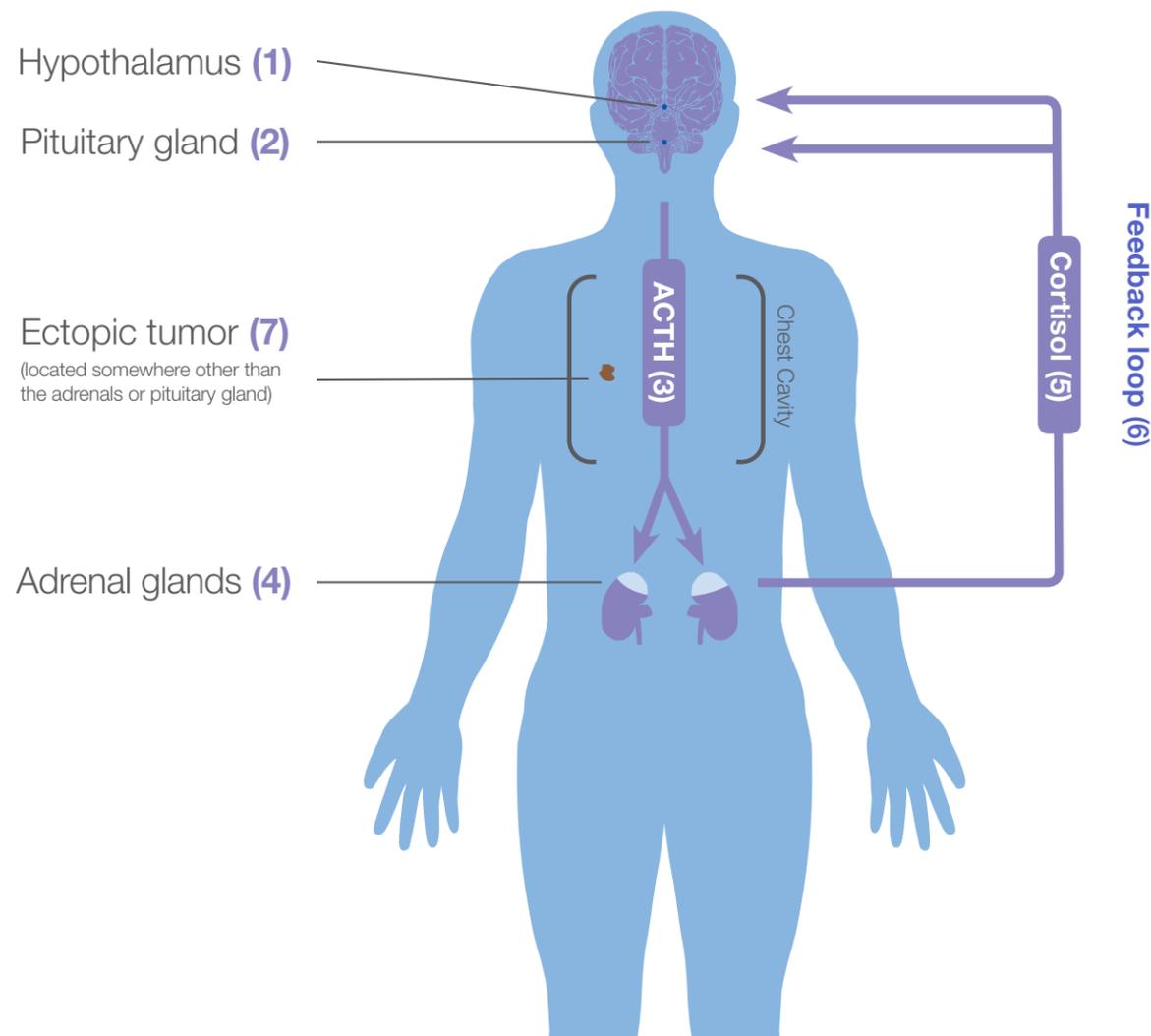
What causes hypercortisolism?

Cortisol secretion is controlled by a set of tissues and glands in the brain and at the top of the kidneys, called the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis.^{2,8,10}

- The **hypothalamus (1)** triggers the **pituitary gland (2)** to release **adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH) (3)**, which activates the **adrenal glands (4)** to release **cortisol (5)** into the blood stream²
- A **feedback loop (6)** ensures that proper levels of cortisol are maintained.² When the HPA axis works normally, cortisol in the blood rises and falls regularly over 24 hours^{1,10}

Sometimes, something from outside your body, such as glucocorticoid medicines (e.g., steroids) can cause **exogenous hypercortisolism**.¹¹

Other times, cortisol excess is caused by something inside your body, such as a tumor; this is called **endogenous hypercortisolism**.¹² Depending on its location the tumor can be either adrenal, pituitary, or **ectopic (7)** (located somewhere else).^{11,13}



What are the signs and symptoms of hypercortisolism?

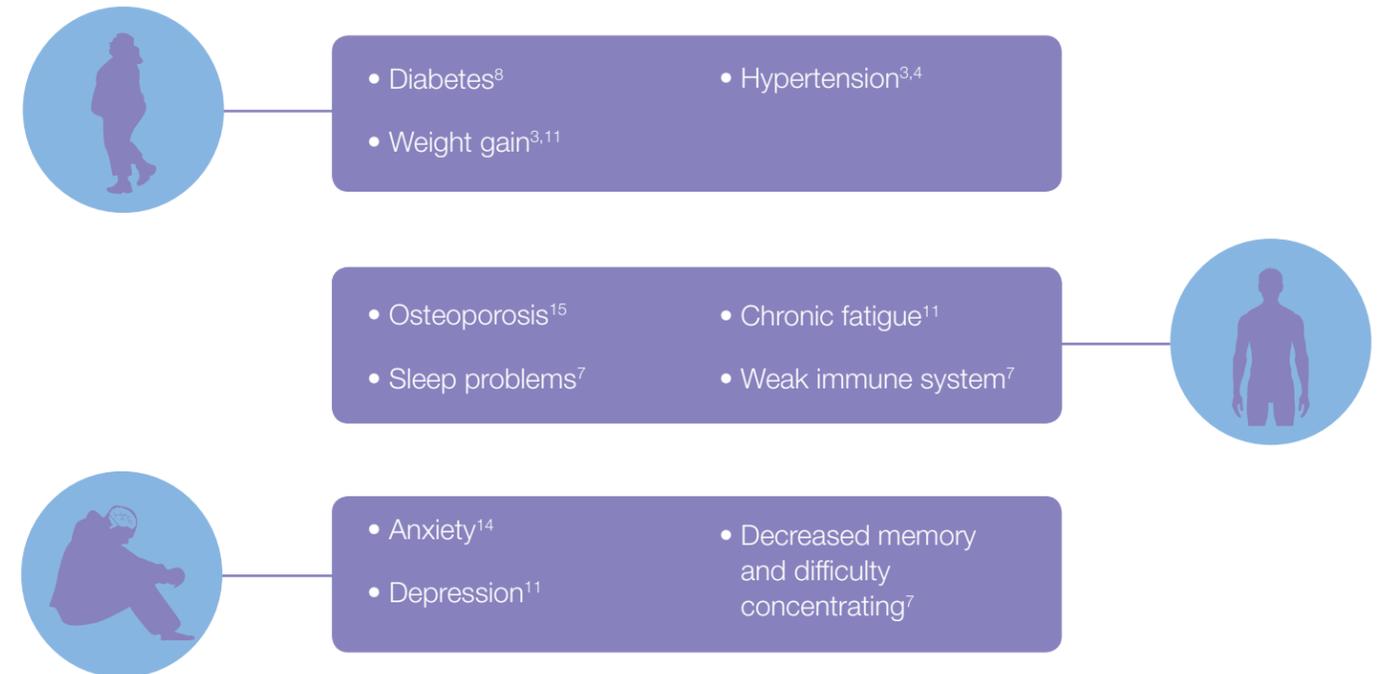
Not all people will have the same signs and symptoms. Common features can include

- High blood pressure^{7,14}
- Diabetes¹⁴
- Problems sleeping⁷
- Mood change^{7,14}
- Buildup of fat in abdomen, neck, and shoulder blades, with thin arms and legs^{3,11}
- Round face^{3,11}
- Easy bruising⁷
- Severe tiredness¹¹
- Muscular weakness¹¹
- Bone weakness¹⁴
- Reddish or purplish streaks on the skin^{3,11}
- Abnormal facial or body hair⁷

What are the consequences of excess cortisol?

Effects of excess cortisol on the body

Too much cortisol in the body can lead to serious health consequences. If left untreated, hypercortisolism can result in weight gain,^{3,11} development or worsening of diabetes,⁸ cardiovascular events,⁵ depression,⁷ anxiety,⁷ osteoporosis,¹⁵ and more.



With this in mind, it's important to partner with your healthcare provider to manage this condition.

Can hypercortisolism be treated?

The goal of treatment is to reduce the negative effects of excess cortisol. This often noticeably improves symptoms associated with excess cortisol.

Treatment options include¹⁶

- **Surgery** — to remove the tumor
- **Radiation** — to reduce the tumor size
- **Medicine** — to help manage the signs and symptoms of the disease

The earlier treatment begins, the better the chances are for improvement in the signs and symptoms of cortisol excess.¹ It is important to remember that high cortisol levels physically change the body, so reversing these changes may take time.



Knowing how hypercortisolism affects your body is an important step toward managing your condition and understanding how to remedy it.

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