

PROGRAM ONE OF TWO

The 7-Day Cortisol Detox

Reset the rhythm, not your willpower

Seven days, one change a day. Nothing to buy, nothing to cut out. You will anchor your wake time, get light into your eyes, eat protein early, move your caffeine, change when you train and build an evening off-ramp — then measure what actually moved.

Format	Day 0 baseline, Days 1–7, Day 10 check-in
Time per day	Five minutes to read, one change to make
What you need	This PDF and a pen
Cost	Free · hol+ / Dr. Taz · September 2026

Not a substitute for medical care. Talk to a physician before starting if you are pregnant or breastfeeding, have type 1 or type 2 diabetes, take medication affecting blood sugar or blood pressure, have a history of disordered eating, or have kidney or liver disease. Neither program involves fasting, calorie restriction or elimination diets.

DAY 0 • BASELINE

Score yourself before you start

Rate each of these from 1 (not at all) to 10 (constantly) as they have been over the last two weeks. Write the number in the Day 0 column. Do not skip this — on Day 7 it is the only evidence you will have.

Symptom	DAY 0	DAY 7	DAY 10
Difficulty waking in the morning			
Afternoon energy crash			
Waking during the night			
Sugar or salt cravings			
Feeling wired but tired at night			
Reactivity — shorter fuse than usual			
Caffeine needed to function			

Also note your wake and sleep times for the last three nights before Day 1.

DAY 01 OF 07

Anchor your wake time

The single highest-impact change in this entire program

Why this one

Cortisol is supposed to spike within 30 to 45 minutes of waking. That spike is what gives you the energy to get up. It is anchored to your wake time, not your sleep time. When your wake time moves around by two or three hours across the week, that spike never establishes a rhythm, and everything downstream — sleep, appetite, energy, mood — moves with it.

Most people try to fix their energy by going to bed earlier. It rarely works, because the wake time is the anchor.

Today's action

Choose one wake time. Set it for all seven days, including the weekend. Pick something you can actually hold — if you currently wake at 6 on weekdays and 9 on weekends, set 7 and stop negotiating with it.

WHAT YOU MIGHT NOTICE

Days 1 through 3 are usually harder, not easier. That is expected. The shift typically shows up around day 4.

Track today

What time did you wake? Did you use the snooze?

DAY 02 OF 07

Get light in your eyes

The signal that tells your body the day has started

Why this one

Light hitting your eyes in the morning is what sets the timing of the entire cortisol curve. Without it, the morning rise stays blunted and the evening decline never fully arrives, which is exactly the “wired at 11pm, flattened at 3pm” pattern.

Indoor lighting is not bright enough to do this. Even an overcast morning outside is many times brighter than a lit room.

Today's action

Ten to fifteen minutes outside within an hour of waking. No sunglasses. Coffee on the porch counts. Walking the dog counts. Sitting in the car does not — glass filters what you need. If you cannot get outside, sit directly beside the brightest window you have.

Track today

Did you get outside? How long?

DAY 03 OF 07

Protein before anything else

Break the glucose-cortisol cycle before it starts

Why this one

When you wake up, blood sugar is already low. If the first thing you eat is coffee and carbohydrate, glucose spikes and then drops, and cortisol is one of the hormones that comes in to rescue it. Do that every morning and you have built a daily cortisol spike into your routine.

Protein blunts the whole cycle. This is also why skipping breakfast entirely, which sounds like it should help, so often doesn't.

Today's action

25 to 30 grams of protein within 90 minutes of waking. Not a target to calculate — just a real portion. Three eggs. Greek yoghurt with seeds. Leftover chicken. A protein shake if that is what makes it happen.

WHAT YOU MIGHT NOTICE

The 11am hunger and the 3pm crash are usually the first things to change, often within two or three days.

Track today

Protein at breakfast, yes or no?

DAY 04 OF 07

Move your caffeine

Not remove. Move.

Why this one

Caffeine amplifies the cortisol peak. Drinking it the moment you wake, when cortisol is already climbing to its highest point of the day, stacks one on top of the other. Then it drops out around the same time cortisol dips naturally, and the afternoon crash lands harder.

Caffeine also has a half-life of five to six hours. A 2pm coffee still has meaningful caffeine in your system at 8pm.

Today's action

Two changes. Wait 60 to 90 minutes after waking before your first cup. And set a cutoff — no caffeine after 12pm, or 2pm if that is a bridge too far. You are not giving anything up. You are moving it.

Track today

First coffee time? Last coffee time?

DAY 05 OF 07

Change when you train, not how much

Fasted high-intensity work is a cortisol multiplier

Why this one

Exercise raises cortisol. That is normal and healthy. But fasted high-intensity training first thing in the morning, on top of the natural morning peak, in someone whose curve is already dysregulated, adds to a load that is already too high.

This is the single most common thing I see in women who are training hard, eating carefully, and getting nowhere.

Today's action

If you train in the morning, eat first — even 20 grams of protein. If you can move intensity to the afternoon, do. And this week, swap one high-intensity session for either resistance training or a walk. Walking is not the consolation prize. For a dysregulated cortisol curve it often outperforms the harder session.

Track today

What did you do, when, and had you eaten?

DAY 06 OF 07

Build an off-ramp

The evening decides the morning

Why this one

Cortisol should reach its lowest point around midnight. Three things reliably keep it up: alcohol, bright light after sunset, and eating late.

Alcohol is the one people underestimate. It helps you fall asleep and then fragments the second half of the night, raising cortisol in the early hours. That 3am wake-up has a cause.

Today's action

Pick two of these for tonight: last meal three hours before bed · no alcohol tonight · dim the lights after sunset, lamps rather than overheads, screens down for the last 30 minutes · ten minutes of anything that isn't a screen before bed.
Two. Not all four.

Track today

Which two? What time did you fall asleep?

DAY 07 OF 07

Measure, then decide

What changed, what to keep, and what needs a doctor

Why this one

Seven days can reset a rhythm. It cannot find a thyroid problem, an iron deficiency, sleep apnea or a hormone shift. Those are the reasons the rhythm broke in the first place, and every one of them is testable.

If you have been tired for more than a few months and your labs came back “normal,” the panel was probably too narrow.

Today's action

Score the same seven symptoms from Day 0. Compare.

Track today

Which scores moved, and by how much?

DAY 7 • READING YOUR RESULTS

What your scores mean

Re-score the same seven symptoms in the Day 7 column, then find yourself below.

Several scores improved

The rhythm was the problem, and it is responding. Keep the wake time and the morning light permanently — those two do most of the work. Add the rest back as they fit.

Some improved, some didn't

Normal. Seven days moves the rhythm. It does not resolve what is driving it.

Nothing changed

This matters, and it is useful information rather than a failure. When sleep, light, protein and caffeine timing all shift and symptoms don't, something specific is usually underneath — thyroid, iron, sleep apnea, PMOS, perimenopause. That needs testing, not more discipline.

DAY 10 • THE FOLLOW-UP

Which two habits stayed?

Three days after the program ends, most people have kept one or two changes and quietly dropped the rest. That is the real result. Score the seven symptoms one last time in the Day 10 column and note which habits survived without effort — those are the ones to build on.

STILL TIRED?

If your scores barely moved, the rhythm is not the problem — something underneath it is, and it is testable. Thyroid, iron, sleep apnea, PMOS, perimenopause. Book a consult at holplus.com/conditions/adrenal-fatigue/ and bring these scores with you.