

Adrenocortical insufficiency: Signs

The symptoms and signs of adrenal insufficiency depend upon the rate and extent of loss of adrenal function, whether mineralocorticoid production is preserved, and the degree of stress. Although many of the symptoms are similar in patients with primary or secondary/tertiary adrenal insufficiency, there are some important differences

Clinical findings in adrenal crisis or acute adrenal insufficiency:

- Dehydration, hypotension, or shock out of proportion to severity of current illness
- Nausea and vomiting with a history of weight loss and anorexia
- Abdominal pain, so-called "acute abdomen"
- Unexplained hypoglycemia
- Unexplained fever
- Hyponatremia, hyperkalemia, azotemia, hypercalcemia, or eosinophilia
- Hyperpigmentation or vitiligo
- Other autoimmune endocrine deficiencies, such as hypothyroidism or gonadal failure

Chronic adrenal insufficiency:

- Weakness, tiredness, fatigue – 100%
- Anorexia – 100%
- GI (nausea, vomit, constipation, abdominal pain, diarrhea)
- Salt craving
- Postural dizziness
- Muscle or joint pains
- Weight loss – 100%
- Hyperpigmentation
- Hypotension
- Vitiligo
- Auricular calcification
- Electrolyte changes (\downarrow Na, \uparrow K, \uparrow Ca) azotemia
- Anemia
- Eosinophilia
- Fatigue, myalgias, and arthralgias

Question:

The predominant manifestation of adrenal crisis is:

- a. Postural dizziness
- b. Fever
- c. Anemia
- d. Shock

Answer: D - The predominant manifestation of adrenal crisis is shock