

Your First 3 Weeks: Cortisol Dominance

The exact starting sequence for calming stubborn midsection weight, wired-but-tired energy, and the stress hormone that's blocking everything else you try

You could eat perfectly and exercise every day — and if cortisol stays chronically elevated, the results will be a fraction of what they should be. Cortisol sits upstream of nearly everything else. This is where to begin.

— The Hormone Reset Code

Cortisol Dominance is one of five hormonal Roadblocks behind the classic 40+ symptoms — stubborn weight around the middle, wired-but-exhausted energy, and a body that stops responding to the diet and exercise that used to work. This guide walks you through the first three weeks of addressing it. Nothing here requires restriction, a gym membership, or giving anything up cold turkey — just removing what's quietly working against you and building the rhythm everything else sits on.

Start Here: Your Daily Cortisol Load Audit

Tick whatever currently applies to your typical day. You don't need to fix all of it at once — just pick your top three.

☐ **Checking your phone within 10 minutes of waking**
Extends the natural morning cortisol peak before the day has begun

☐ **Coffee before food, first thing**
Adds a cortisol spike on top of your body's natural morning surge

☐ **Skipping breakfast, or eating it 90+ minutes after waking**
Blood sugar drops, triggering cortisol as a compensatory measure

☐ **High-intensity exercise first thing in the morning**
Stacks an exercise cortisol spike on top of the natural morning one

☐ **Alcohol most evenings, even one drink**
Produces a rebound cortisol spike in the second half of the night

☐ **Screens in the hour before bed**
Blocks the natural evening cortisol fall that sleep depends on

Week 1 — Foundation

WEEK ONE

1

Foundation

Reduce cortisol load, establish rhythm — nothing else yet

GOAL

Remove what's working against you before adding anything new. No new exercise routine, no restriction — just rhythm.

- **Same wake time every day**, including weekends, within a 30-minute window
- **10-20 minutes of morning light** before you check your phone
- **Protein-rich breakfast within 90 minutes of waking** — eggs, Greek yoghurt, smoked salmon
- **Phone out of the bedroom** — the single highest-impact sleep change available
- **Kitchen closed by 7pm** — finish eating at least 3 hours before bed
- **A 10-20 minute walk daily**, ideally after a meal — no intensity required
- **One evening wind-down practice**, 4 nights this week — a slow breath, a stretch, a few minutes of stillness

Morning Rhythm

1. Light before phone
2. Breakfast within 90 min
3. Delay caffeine 60-90 min

Evening Rhythm

1. Kitchen closed by 7pm
2. Screens dimmed from 8pm
3. One wind-down practice nightly

Week 2 — Activation

WEEK TWO

2

Activation

Add nutrition and movement — without undoing Week 1

GOAL

With cortisol load down and rhythm in place, you now have room to add structure without it becoming another stressor.

- **Keep every Week 1 habit going** — these become the floor, not a phase you move on from
- **Protein first on your plate**, every meal — the single biggest lever for steadier blood sugar
- **2-3 gentle strength or resistance sessions** this week — full body, nothing punishing
- **20-30 minutes of mobility or restorative movement** — yoga, stretching, a slow walk
- **One boundary you set this week** — a commitment declined or renegotiated, protecting your evening wind-down

Week 3 — Optimisation

WEEK THREE

3

Optimisation

Read the early signals and adjust

GOAL

Most women notice early shifts by now — steadier energy, better sleep, calmer mood. This week is about paying attention to that, not chasing the scale.

- **Keep Weeks 1-2 running** — by now they should feel less effortful
- **Do one honest weekly check-in** — energy, sleep, mood, cravings. Be specific rather than vague
- **Notice what's working and what isn't** — that's the information that tells you where to focus next
- **Don't add a fourth or fifth new habit yet** — refine what's running before expanding it

A NOTE ON THE SCALE

If weight hasn't moved by the end of week 3, that doesn't mean it isn't working. Sleep, energy, and mood consistently improve before the scale does when cortisol is the driver — the number tends to catch up once the hormonal environment shifts, not before.

You've just done Weeks 1-3.

Week 4 — where everything gets consolidated into a lasting rhythm — plus the specific adjustments for your exact hormonal profile (not just cortisol, but thyroid, insulin, progesterone, and oestrogen too), live inside *The Hormone Reset Code*.

The Hormone Reset Code — Your First 3 Weeks: Cortisol Dominance · This guide is general information, not medical advice — speak with your GP about your individual circumstances