Understanding Cushing’s Disease

Cushing’s disease is a rare but serious, debilitating endocrine disorder caused by a noncancerous pituitary tumor which ultimately leads to excess cortisol in the body.

What Is Cortisol?
A vital hormone that regulates metabolism and cardiovascular function, and helps the body respond to stress.

Excess cortisol leads to severe physical and physiological changes in the body, most noticeably uncontrollable weight gain, central obesity and a round, red full face.

High levels of cortisol can also cause depression, anxiety and irritability.

Comorbidities
- Diabetes
- Depression and anxiety
- Irritability
- Osteoporosis and bone fractures
- Hypertension
- Kidney stones
- High cholesterol and triglycerides
- Infertility

Central obesity (abdomen that sticks out with thin arms and legs)

Buffalo hump (collection of fat on the back of the neck)

Thin skin and easy bruising

Excess body and facial hair

Interrupted menstrual cycle

Purple stretch marks (striae) on the abdomen, breasts and thighs

Round, red full face

Who’s Affected?
1 to 2 people per million

Most commonly presents in people 20-50 years old

Women are more likely to get Cushing’s disease than men

The time to diagnosis for a patient is on average 6 years from the time they notice symptoms

Cushing’s disease patients have up to 4x greater risk of mortality than the general population

*All of these signs and symptoms are not always present in every patient.

Cushing’s Disease Patients Should…

- Work with an endocrinologist to manage the disease by monitoring various measures of disease such as urinary-free cortisol.
- Talk with an endocrinologist who is familiar with Cushing’s disease about disease management, including the right plan for them.
- Consider joining support or advocacy groups for encouragement and valuable insights.