DHEA and Anxiety/Depression: A Quick Overview

Dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA) is a precursor to testosterone and estrogen, with direct effects on the brain, mood, and stress response. Its balance with **cortisol** is critical for mental well-being.

DHEA & Depression

- **Neurosteroid Effects**: DHEA enhances **GABA and NMDA receptor function**, supporting mood stabilization.
- **Antidepressant-Like Properties**: Studies show **low DHEA levels** are associated with **major depression**, particularly in individuals with high cortisol.
- **Supports Neurogenesis**: DHEA promotes **BDNF (Brain-Derived Neurotrophic Factor)**, aiding brain plasticity and resilience.
- **Regulates Serotonin & Dopamine**: Helps balance **monoamines**, reducing anhedonia and improving motivation.

DHEA & Anxiety

- **Cortisol Antagonist**: DHEA buffers **excess cortisol**, reducing stress-related anxiety and **HPA axis overactivation**.
- **Neurosteroid Modulation**: Its metabolites (like DHEA-S) support **GABAergic tone**, promoting relaxation.
- **Adrenal Fatigue Connection**: Chronic stress depletes DHEA, increasing susceptibility to **panic and anxiety**.

Clinical Considerations

- **Testing First**: Over-supplementing DHEA in **high-androgen individuals** may increase irritability or agitation.
- **Dose Matters**: Low doses (~5-25 mg) may be beneficial for mood, while higher doses may require monitoring.
- **Caution in Over-methylators**: Some individuals sensitive to **neurostimulatory effects** may tolerate **7-keto DHEA** better.

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Bottom Line

DHEA can be **mood-enhancing, anxiolytic, and neuroprotective**, but its effects depend on individual **hormonal balance and stress levels**. Testing and a personalized approach are key.

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