

Healthy Hormones - Estrogen & Women

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We all have an incredible orchestra of hormones literally playing the soundtrack of our lives, allowing us to have a bounce in our step and move through life in a healthy, vital manner. That orchestra is complex and interdependent- when one hormone is off, the others can slowly but surely become out of tune. Dr. Clark recently discussed the relationship between testosterone, estrogen and the impact on a man's health. Estrogen is vitally important to a woman's health through her lifetime.

Most know that estrogen is a key hormone in puberty, critical to fertility, and drops dramatically with menopause. What you might not know is that it also plays an important role in many other areas. It is critical in bone health, helping our bones stay strong. The earlier a woman experiences menopause, the higher her risk for osteoporosis- a disease in which the bones become thin and more brittle, increasing the potential for fractures. It's a major player in our cardiovascular health, helping to decrease cholesterol and keep our blood vessels flexible. It helps maintain our skin's collagen and thickness and has a positive impact on brain functioning. Estrogen has an influence on other hormonal systems including thyroid balance, cortisol production, and blood sugar metabolism. This can be positive or negative depending on how "heavy-handed" the influence is.

Estrogen, like many other hormones, is a bit of a Goldilocks. Too little and too much can both cause big problems. Estrogen needs to be just right. Estrogen deficiency can negatively impact the systems mentioned and too much can wreak it's own havoc. Some common symptoms of estrogen excess include irregular menstrual cycles, PMS, mood swings, headaches and weight gain. Too much estrogen can not only increase our risk for estrogen-sensitive cancers such as breast and ovarian cancers but also the risk for our future generations. Recent studies have shown that excess estrogen in pregnancy can lead to a higher risk of cancer (via genetic

changes) for our daughters, grand daughters and potentially even great-granddaughters.

During puberty it's expected for hormones to be a little all over the place as they mature and come to balance. All too often, young women in their late teens to 20's and 30's are quickly placed on oral birth control as a way to manage their hormone imbalances instead of working on why there is a problem in the first place. In the mid-40's to 50's, we begin the experience of peri-menopause when the process of a "new normal" is being created. But there may have never been a healthy normal and this can make menopause rather difficult.

In women, estrogen is produced primarily by the ovaries but is also created in smaller amounts by the adrenal glands and fat cells. We are exposed to additional sources of hormones from our food along with chemicals that behave as synthetic forms of estrogen found in plastics, lotions, cosmetics and even certain forms of paper. Poor digestive functions lead to estrogens recirculating instead of being eliminated. As you can see, there are many factors conspiring to create an estrogen overload situation.

While hormone balance can be complex, there are things you can start doing today that can help tremendously for healthy amounts of estrogen and a well playing orchestra. Start with a healthy diet, filled with REAL food- not processed, lots of fresh vegetables/fruits, lean protein/organic meat and healthy fats. Move your body daily. Develop healthy stress management techniques and get good sleep. When you need additional support, come see the doctors at True Health Medicine, PC.



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