



Natural Approaches to Balancing Hormones

There are seven glands in the body that secrete natural chemicals called hormones. These chemicals regulate energy, sleep, stress level, hydration, sexual function, tissue growth and mood. As we age, these chemical messengers become increasingly imbalanced, which can result in a wide variety of health problems. In fact, cancer, diabetes, heart disease and osteoporosis have all been associated with hormonal imbalances. Also, hormones naturally decline with age, which can create the unpleasant symptoms of menopause and andropause.

With the advent of modern medicine, it is possible to artificially replace the body's hormones with either duplicates of natural hormones or with synthetic analogs of the body's hormones. This hormone replacement therapy (HRT) is used to aid specific glandular disorders, such as diabetes and hypothyroidism, and it is also used to counteract some of the effects of aging. For instance, women have been using HRT for decades to counteract the natural decline in estrogen (and sometimes progesterone) levels after menopause.

Recently, HRT has become increasingly popular with men. It has been estimated that more than 13 million men have low testosterone levels and demand for male testosterone therapy has increased 400% since 1999.

HRT is not without side effects, especially when synthetic analogs of hormones are used. Many prescription hormones aren't the same as the natural hormones produced in the body. They're slightly altered molecules, which can alter how they interact with tissues. Even with natural hormone replacement, it's easy to upset the delicate balance of hormones, as increasing levels of one hormone will depress or enhance levels of other hormones.

For example, postmenopausal women who take combined estrogen/progestin hormone-replacement therapy for three or more years face a fourfold increased risk of developing various forms of lobular breast cancer, according to researchers at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center. Moreover, more than half of post-menopausal women who take hormone replacement therapy to relieve their discomfort can expect to see a dramatic resurgence of symptoms when they discontinue the therapy.

Balancing Hormones Naturally

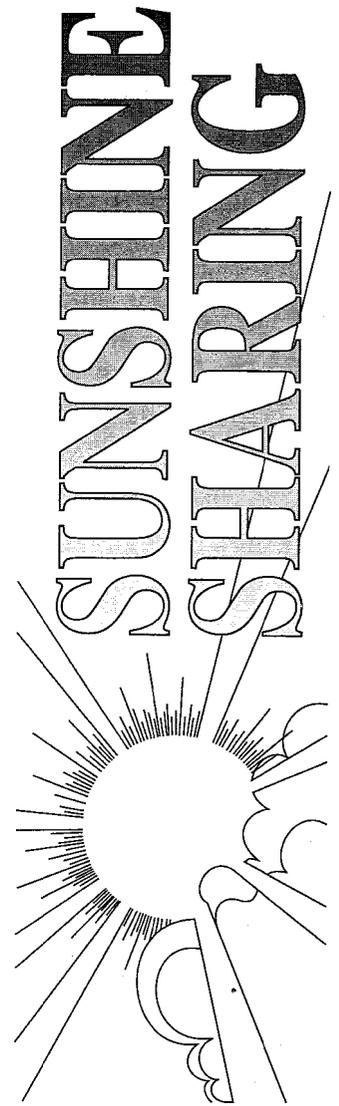
There are natural ways to help keep hormones in balance. To begin with, hormones respond to imbalances in biochemistry caused by poor diet, negative thoughts and stressful emotions. Adopting a healthier diet and lifestyle will help keep hormones in balance naturally.

If diet and lifestyle changes aren't enough, one can add herbs or nutritional supplements to try to regulate the levels of specific hormones. Herbs and supplements have the advantage of working with the complex feedback mechanisms of the body so they don't produce some of the potential negative effects of HRT.

If additional balancing is necessary, natural hormone replacement can be used. This is done using hormones identical to the ones the body creates either orally or topically. Glandular supplements can also be used as they contain minute amounts of natural hormones and the nutrients needed to build the specific gland they come from. Ideally, when using this type of natural HRT, you should have your situation monitored by a competent health practitioner and/or some type of hormone testing.

In some cases, prescription drugs will be necessary, but even when prescription hormones are required, using herbs and nutritional supplements can often make them effective at lower doses, minimizing the risk of side effects. In these cases one should be monitored by a competent physician who understands hormones.

Look inside to learn more about natural hormone replacement therapy...



Important Notice

The information in *Sunshine Sharing* is for educational purposes only and should not be used to diagnose and treat diseases. If you have a health problem, we recommend you consult a competent health practitioner before embarking on any course of treatment.

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As mentioned on page one, nutrition is important if you want to keep your hormones properly balanced. All hormones are made from either amino acids (protein) or cholesterol. So, diets high in carbohydrates and low in protein (and believe it or not, cholesterol) can cause hormonal imbalances.

In addition, all hormones require vitamins and minerals for synthesis. For instance, both thyroxin (from the thyroid) and epinephrine (from the adrenals) require the amino acid l-tyrosine for synthesis. Both of these hormones also require B vitamins and vitamin C. Thyroxin also requires the elements iodine, zinc and selenium, and epinephrine requires the minerals copper and iron.

Since all hormones are interconnected, excess levels of one hormone throw other hormones out of balance. For instance, the high insulin levels created by modern diets high in refined sugar and other simple carbohydrates disrupt the function of the thyroid, adrenals and reproductive glands.

So, if you want to reduce hormonal problems associated with aging, start by eliminating (or at least severely reducing) consumption of simple carbohydrates like refined sugar, high fructose corn syrup and white flour products. Instead, consume lots of fresh vegetables, whole fruits and healthy animal foods, like grass-fed meat, free range eggs and organic, whole milk dairy products. This will have a very positive effect on your glandular health.

Stress and Hormonal Balance

It's also important to remember that our attitude affects the output of our hormones. Fear, worry, stress, holding grudges, being angry and irritable and constantly thinking negative thoughts also disrupts hormone production. So, focusing on positive things, being grateful, being quick to forgive, and managing stress and anger will also automatically help your glandular (and nervous system) to function better.

Adaptogens can be helpful for reducing stress and promoting better hormonal health as you age. These herbs modulate the output of stress hormones, help to balance blood sugar levels and improve the balance of hormones in general. Many adaptogens have been used in various cultures as anti-aging remedies, helping people stay strong and healthy as they grow older. These tonic/adaptogenic herbs include **American ginseng**, **Korean ginseng**, **eleuthero root**, **ashwaganda** and **dong quai**.

As we grow older, the body relies increasingly on the adrenal glands for synthesis of reproductive hormones. If your adrenals are "burned-out" from stress, you will feel tired during the day and be unable to get a peaceful night's sleep. Your sex drive will diminish and your immune system will also be compromised. When this is the case, **Nervous Fatigue Formula** is a good choice for balancing your hormones. It can aid energy levels, promote better sleep and even improve sex drive.

Another option for balancing hormones that are disturbed by chronic stress is **Adrenal Support**. This formula contains adrenal glandular substance and herbs and nutrients to support the production of adrenal hormones.

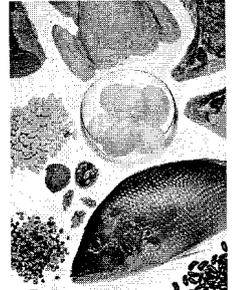
The Importance of DHEA

One of the reasons the adrenals are so important to keeping hormones balanced as we age is that they produce DHEA. DHEA is the most plentiful hormone in the body and a precursor to both estrogen and testosterone. Decreased levels of DHEA result in reduced levels of sex hormones in both men and women. Teenagers, with their "raging" hormones, have high levels of DHEA, but there is a natural decline in DHEA production starting in the late 20s.

Research suggests that adequate levels of DHEA can help to prevent diabetes, cancer, heart disease, blood clots, autoimmune issues and chronic inflammatory conditions. DHEA may also be helpful in promoting weight loss, improving brain function, reducing stress and anxiety, supporting the immune system, reducing allergic reactions and aiding bone growth.

DHEA is produced from pregnenolone, which is synthesized from cholesterol. Pregnenolone is available as an oral supplement and is also the precursor to progesterone, aldosterone and cortisol. If hormone testing suggests that levels of estrogen, testosterone and/or progesterone are low, supplementation with pregnenolone may be helpful.

Since pregnenolone and DHEA are synthesized from cholesterol, low cholesterol levels (often caused by statin drugs) can result in low DHEA levels. Therefore, eggs, red meat and other foods containing natural cholesterol can actually support DHEA production and overall glandular health.



DHEA Supplements

DHEA is also available as an oral supplement, but it may be wise to get a saliva hormone test before taking it to verify your levels are low, as it is possible to overdose on DHEA. In cases where DHEA levels are actually low, supplementation may be helpful.

A well-known French study looked at three hundred men and women between the ages of sixty and eighty. These subjects were given DHEA replacement therapy for one year. DHEA supplementation greatly improved the hydration, color, thickness and tone of the skin therefore adding to their youthful appearance.

Stanford University, in a study involving patients with lupus, an autoimmune disorder, found that DHEA helped with inflammation and the reduction of flare-ups. The inflammation was so reduced that they were able to reduce the dosage of prednisone, an anti-inflammatory steroid medication.

DHEA-M is a DHEA supplement for men, which contains 25 mg of DHEA in a base of herbs—sarsaparilla root, damiana leaves, saw palmetto fruit, pumpkin seeds and Korean ginseng root extract. The herbs may be helpful in enhancing testosterone production in men and inhibiting the breakdown of testosterone into substances that cause prostate enlargement.

DHEA-F is for women, and contains 25 mg of DHEA in a base of wild yam root, false unicorn root and chaste tree (Vitex) berry extract. As we'll explain shortly, these herbs can help to balance estrogen and progesterone levels in women. The dosage for both DHEA-F and DHEA-M is one capsule per day.

Estrogen

Estrogen is one of the most powerful hormones in the body, and the hormone that creates feminine characteristics. Men produce small amounts of it, too, but it is the dominant hormone in women. Estrogen is not a single chemical, as there are three types of estrogens produced in the body. There are also xenoestrogens (estrogenic chemicals) and phytoestrogens (estrogen-like compounds in plants).



The three naturally occurring estrogens are estrone, estradiol and estrane. Estrone is the main estrogen that is produced after menopause. It is produced in the adrenal glands, liver and fat cells, as well as the ovaries. Prior to menopause, the ovaries convert estrone into the more powerful estradiol. After menopause, this job is left to the fat cells, liver and adrenal glands.

Thus, exhausted adrenals, low body fat and a congested liver will make menopause much more difficult. A certain amount of body fat is necessary for women during menopause, which is why many women will experience some weight gain around this time. This is not unhealthy. Women going into menopause will have fewer problems if they consume good fats such as fish oils, coconut oil, organic butter, avocados and nuts in their diets.

Estradiol is the main estrogen that is produced before menopause. This form of estrogen helps with absorption of minerals, including calcium, magnesium, potassium and zinc. When it is too low women may experience bone loss, fatigue, sleep issues, memory problems, sticky platelets and depression. The down side of estradiol is that it stimulates the uterine lining and breast tissue, and high levels have been shown to increase the risk of uterine and breast cancers.

The third form of estrogen, estriol, does not stimulate the breast and uterine lining and has been shown to be helpful in protecting against breast cancer. Asian women, who eat a lot of fermented soy products, have significantly lower rates of breast cancer than women in other parts of the world. Vegetarian women of any ethnic background also have lower risk of breast cancer. The connection is that both Asian and vegetarian women have high levels of estriol.

There are over 400 functions in the body in which estrogen plays a role. It affects the mineralization of bone, energy levels and mood, libido, insulin levels and metabolism, nerve growth, the health of the intestinal lining and brain function. So, it is important for women to have adequate estrogen levels.

Enhancing Estrogens

Many plants contain compounds that have a weak estrogen-like effect. These phytoestrogens may have a protective effect against estrogen-dependent cancers and ease the transition of menopause. Soy is one of the most recognized sources of phytoestrogens, but they are found in most beans, dark, green leafy vegetables, flax seeds and high lignan flax seed oil.

Women who consume foods rich in phytoestrogens will generally be healthier as they age and less prone to estrogen-dependent cancers. Women who wish to supplement their intake of phytoestrogens can take **PhytoSoy** (a soy-based phytoestrogen supplement) or **Flax Seed Oil with Lignans**. Another phytoestrogen supplement is **Breast Assured**, which contains phytoestrogens and other nutrients that may be protective against breast cancer.

Many women have found that **black cohosh** helps with menopausal symptoms. Although the mechanism by which black cohosh works isn't well understood, many women do benefit from it. **Flash Ease** contains dong quai and black cohosh in a time-release form and is often helpful during menopause to ease hot flashes.

C-X is another hormone-balancing herbal formula that many women find helpful for naturally balancing hormones, especially during the change of life. It is one of the supplements in **Natural Changes**, a packet of supplements helpful for hormonal support during menopause.

If natural remedies aren't enough, natural estrogen can be obtained, with a prescription, in a cream base for topical application. This is a safer alternative to the commonly used Premarin®, which is derived from the urine of pregnant horses.

Progesterone

The main job of progesterone is to ensure the survival of the fetus in pregnancy. During pregnancy, progesterone levels are high to prevent periods. If estrogen levels get too high, spotting and eventually miscarriage can result. An herb that helps to tip the balance in favor of progesterone is **false unicorn**, which has been used to prevent miscarriages and aid other female problems brought on by excess estrogen and deficient progesterone.

Estrogen and progesterone work together. If the ratio of estrogen to progesterone is out of balance women can experience weight gain, depression, cholesterol problems, fatigue, decreased libido and insulin resistance. With the chemical estrogens (xenoestrogens) found in commercial animal foods, pesticide residues and plastics, many women have an imbalance of estrogens in their system, resulting in a condition called estrogen dominance.

Excessively high estrogen levels also contribute to breast cancer, uterine fibroids, heavy menstrual bleeding and PMS with irritability and anxiety. **Indole-3 Carbinol** enhances the liver detoxification pathways that break down excess estrogen.

Chaste tree berries work with the pituitary to help maintain a proper balance of estrogen and progesterone and have been used to balance women's reproductive cycles and aid with menopause. They are found in the formula **Wild Yam and Chaste Tree**.

Many women have taken synthetic progesterones (progestins), both as HRT and in birth control pills. Progestins don't have the same chemical structure as natural progesterone and studies suggest they may increase the risk of breast cancer, blood clots, strokes and other cardiovascular diseases and pulmonary embolism.

Fortunately, natural progesterone is available as a topical cream for natural HRT. **Pro-G-Yam cream** is available in 5 mg and 500 mg strengths. It is applied topically and has been used to help balance out women's reproductive cycles and ease menopausal symptoms.

Continued on page 4

Additional Help and Information

For more information on natural hormone replacement, contact the person who gave this newsletter to you or seek professional help. You can also consult the following sources:

The Comprehensive Guide to Nature's Sunshine Products by Tree of Light
The Complete Woman's Herbal by Anne McIntyre
Vital Man by Stephen Harrod Buhner



Balanced Hormones and Healthy Aging

As we age, levels of certain hormones decline and the balance of hormones in the body can become increasingly disordered. These hormonal imbalances can cause both physical and emotional problems as women enter menopause and men go through a similar (but less dramatic) change called andropause.

Learn how we can keep hormone levels naturally balanced in this *Sunshine Sharing*.

Continued from Page Three

Testosterone

Testosterone is the dominant hormone in men, although women also make it in smaller amounts. This important hormone gives men muscle strength, a lean body mass, good bone density, mental sharpness and their sex drive. It also enhances a man's mood, creativity and imagination, while reducing his risk of developing degenerative diseases as he ages.

Unfortunately, men's testosterone levels have been steadily declining for decades. There is a normal decline in testosterone with aging, but this decrease is on top of the normal decline. Xenoestrogens, fluoridation of drinking water, lack of physical activity and poor nutrition may all be factors in this decline. This decline results in more problems with weight management, depression, erectile dysfunction and prostate problems.

The assault on masculinity is also a social one. Being manly has in many ways become politically incorrect. Men are encouraged to suppress their natural tendency to pursue their goals with dogged determination and defend their families and values. Exercise and activities that enhance self-esteem will help boost testosterone levels.

Several herbs can help boost testosterone levels in men, including both **American ginseng** and **Korean ginseng**, **maca** and **muira puama**. Two formulas that can help boost testosterone in men are **DHEA-M**, mentioned earlier and **Men's X-Action Reloaded**, which can also help with erectile dysfunction. Where natural means are insufficient, testosterone is also available as a topical cream by prescription from many physicians.

For assistance in determining what natural options may be best for you, talk to the person who gave this newsletter to you. They can give you additional help and information.