

Balance Your Hormones Naturally



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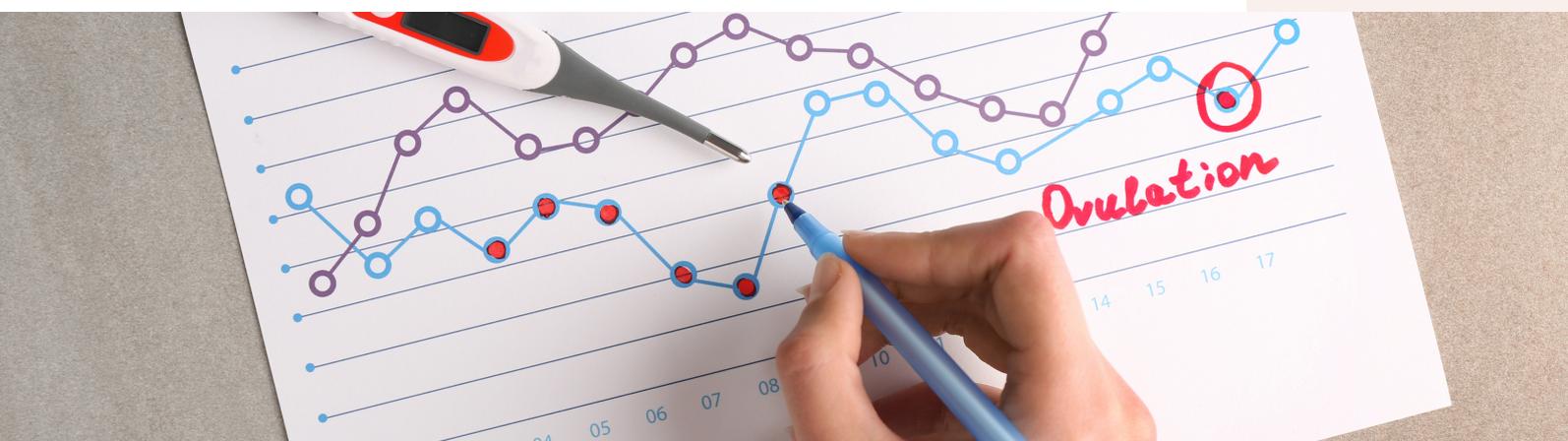
This handout is a condensed guide on how to balance your hormones naturally. We have some 50 circulating hormones in the body, however I will cover just two areas that come up in my clinic as a Nutritional Therapist - the female sex hormones and the thyroid hormones. The purpose of the guide is that it is an overview of some of the foods and lifestyle factors that may help to balance hormones. It is not exhaustive and should be not used to follow a diet, these are just some of the areas that could benefit with some focus and support. It is always advisable to seek the guidance of a Registered Nutritional Therapist for nutrition, supplement and lifestyle advice.

What are hormones?

- The Endocrine system includes endocrine glands such as the hypothalamus, pituitary, thyroid, ovaries, adrenals and more
- Hypothalamus and pituitary in the brain are the CEO and the management team
- Hormones are 'Chemical messengers' that work in homeostasis (balance)
- Involved in growth & development, metabolism, mood, appetite and reproduction

How do I know if I have a hormone imbalance?

- Female sex hormone imbalance may present as irregular or absent periods, PMS symptoms, hot flushes/night sweats, acne, infertility, insulin resistance, PCOS. During the menopausal years, women will experience imbalances due to hormone fluctuations
- Thyroid hormone imbalances such as Hypothyroidism (under active thyroid) may present as weight gain (with poor appetite), fatigue, feeling cold, hair loss, constipation, heavy or long periods, hoarseness, poor memory and concentration, low mood, goitre



How can I find out more?

- Blood testing can be useful to investigate symptoms.
- E.g. full sex hormone panel, thyroid panel, fasting blood glucose, iron (ferritin) would be useful. Functional testing.
- Working closely with a Registered Nutritional Therapist to support your symptoms
- Consult your GP, who can diagnose conditions such as PCOS or hypothyroidism. If struggling with fertility, don't wait too long. (12 months if under 35, 6 months if over 35).

What is the link between hormone balance & nutrition?

- 'We are what we eat'
- To produce hormones, they require essential nutrients
- To work efficiently, they require an optimally functioning body
- Some foods can increase or reduce the production and/or action of our hormones - e.g. if we think about the liver detox process, hydration, grapefruit juice and oestrogen, alcohol burdens the liver
- Gut health - we excrete hormones we no longer need and so the GIT needs to work optimally. Inflammation can increase intestinal permeability, which can impact our hormone balance



What next?

There are certain foods and nutrients that can help support hormone production and hormone balance. The following slides will go into more detail on some key topics

Protein

- The building blocks of our hormones (protein is made up of amino acids - 20 in total, 9 are essential)
- We typically need at least 0.8g protein per kg of body weight (more based on our activity/goals)
- Animal protein VS plant protein. Animal protein has all of the essential amino acids. Vegans have to work harder to get all 20 amino acids e.g. food combining.
- Protein helps with satiety, blood glucose balance & helpful if weight loss is a consideration
- Choose organic/grass fed chicken/meat, wild fish & focus on increasing plant based sources



Healthy Fats

- 'Fats won't make you fat' - we need 70g/per day, no more than 20g saturated. Understand the difference between healthy fats & not so healthy fats (unsaturated vs saturated) and avoid low fat foods
- Omega 3 VS Omega 6. Both are polyunsaturated fats but omega 3 has anti-inflammatory action although it is harder to obtain in the diet (found in oily fish, hemp, flax and chia seeds. Can be helpful to supplement). Omega 6 is found in veg fats and oils like sunflower oil.
- Monounsaturated fats such as olive oil, avocados, most nuts & nut oils

Eat the rainbow

- Aim for 6-8 portions of veg, 2-3 portions of fruit
- Eat the rainbow - reds, oranges, yellows, greens, purples etc
- Rich in vitamins A, C, E, B's & phytonutrients. A, C & E vitamins are antioxidants (mitigate oxidative damage, which is something caused by our environment, diet & lifestyle)
- Provides fibre, which is important for gut health
- Aim to eat organic & seasonal. Frozen good too!
- Steamed is best but great to add to soups, stews & curries this time of year



Cruciferous veg

- Dark green leafy veg are rich in B vitamins and magnesium, both needed for energy production and hormone balance
- Often, low B vitamins are associated with hormone imbalances, particularly B6 (may help improve PMS). We know folate (B9) is essential during pregnancy for foetal development, but we need enough before too conception
- Indole-3-Carbinol - substance that supports the detoxification of hormones
- Includes kale, cabbage, broccoli, sprouts, pak choy, cauliflower

Blood Sugar Balance

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- Sugar, particularly refined sugar is not needed in the body (pro-inflammatory)
- Blood sugar dysregulation and insulin resistance leads to excess hormones in circulation
- Focus on low GL foods e.g. berries, citrus, bananas, whole grains, legumes, sweet potato versus starchy veg. Also the way we cook changes the GL of foods
- Switch refined carbohydrates such as white rice, pasta, bread to wholegrain varieties such as brown rice, pea pasta, rye bread, sourdough
- Watch out for hidden sources including alcohol and shop bought sauces



Gut Health

- Facilitates the removal of 'used' hormones
- Microbiome is important - oral, gut & vaginal. Testing can be useful in clinic
- Often changes in gut health are experienced during different life stages e.g. constipation in menopause
- 30g fibre per day is vital for good gut health. Bitter foods also important.
- Prebiotic's & Probiotic's e.g. oats, banana, leeks, garlic & kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi

What is the link between hormone balance & lifestyle?

- HPA axis down regulates the HPG axis which essentially means that stress hormones reduce our sex hormones. Stress impairs hormone function
- 'Fight or flight' vs 'rest & digest'. We want to be in the latter as much as possible. 'Fight or flight' equals 'danger' which can lead to hormone imbalances
- Endocrine disruptors can mimic oestrogen
- The thyroid is like a sponge for toxins



What next?

There are certain lifestyle factors that can help support hormone production and hormone balance. The following slides will go into more detail on some key topics

Stress

- Reduce stress to help support hormone balance. Be conscious of every day stressors and try to avoid stressful situations
- Find out what works for YOU (i.e. don't force meditation if not for you)
- Anaerobic exercise (yoga, pilates, walking) breathing exercises, meditation, have a bath, essential oils, read, journal, connection, nature
- Reduce stimulants. Sleep (ideally 7-9 hours).



Endocrine disruptors

- Reduce your toxic load. E.g. heavy metals and plastics, pesticides, food containers, chemicals in every day products such as shampoo, shower gels, deodorant and unfiltered water
- Drink from glass, swap cling film for bees wax wraps, don't heat food in plastic, filtered water, swap to natural/organic products

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