

Natural Hormones

Menopause is a normal transition in a woman's life. Menopause happens when a woman permanently stops producing eggs in the ovary. It is usually diagnosed when a woman has not had a menstrual cycle for one year. Symptoms associated with menopause include sleep disturbance, hot flashes, weight gain, and mood swings.

The ovary is the principal source of estradiol, a powerful estrogen that is produced the first half of the menstrual cycle. Progesterone, another hormone, is produced during the second half of the cycle. Estrogen and progesterone work in balance in a woman's body. These two hormones affect all organ systems in our body. Why is this important? After menopause these hormones can be in an imbalance. Your body has the ability to generate a weaker estrogen called estrone, but is not able to produce progesterone, a building block for many major hormones, including the thyroid hormone. As estrone rises and progesterone falls, the body may become imbalanced hormonally. Bringing the body back into balance usually improves symptoms.

Natural hormones, also called bio-identical hormones, are very different from laboratory made hormones. The traditional hormones Premarin and Prempro are hormones manufactured from the urine of pregnant horses. These hormones were studied in the Women's Health Initiative and in some instances were found to be harmful, not beneficial. Bio-identical or natural hormones are derived from soy. They are refined to be identical to the human hormone molecule. All organs in the body have receptor sites and bio-identical hormones fit into our body's receptor sites like a key in a lock. Also, our bodies contain the right enzymes to break down and use these hormones properly and efficiently. Bio-identical hormones are safe and can be used to help patients with menopause symptoms.

Achieving healthy hormonal balance includes a good diet and stress reduction. Eating organic meat or cutting down meat portions helps to limit the exposure of growth hormones. Green leafy vegetables and fruit are needed to help our bodies resist cancer and provide important vitamins. When we are under stress our adrenal glands pump out cortisol, the stress hormone. Our bodies will take progesterone and convert it to cortisol but if too much gets converted, there is not enough progesterone left to be converted to testosterone and our sex drive will decline. Stress kills our sex drive!

Assessing hormonal imbalances can be done by saliva or blood testing. Saliva tests measure the hormonal levels in the tissues of your body. These tissues are where the hormones do their work. If you decide to do saliva testing, you will be given a kit to take home. Monitoring hormone levels forms the foundation for correction and balance. You will also be asked to fill out a symptom sheet to see if progress is being made. The important take-home message is that achieving hormonal balance is not just a matter of using a cream or taking a pill. It is about making committed lifestyle changes that will benefit all the organ systems in your body. We believe that managing menopause involves an individualized approach. Patients are partners in their healthcare and using a combination of diet, exercise, stress reduction, and natural hormones may give you energy, reclaim your sexuality, and improve your life.