

# The Hormone Healing Guide

THE WHOLE BODY APPROACH TO  
BALANCING YOUR CYCLE  
WITH FUNCTIONAL MEDICINE

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*This book is dedicated to you.*

*For not giving up,  
Determined in your search for answers,  
To finding hope and healing.*



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# Introduction

This guide is meant to be a simple overview of hormone health and empower you to create a personalized plan with support. This is not meant to be a medical physiology text book with in-depth reviews, research, and analysis of hormone pathways, conversions, and complicated medical terms.

Sometimes we feel as though female hormones are the most complicated and misunderstood process of human physiology. Physicians, researchers, celebrities, supplement companies, and women as patients cannot agree on the best treatments, support, or therapies. Everyone recommends a different prescription or protocol then we turn around to find that cancer is a side effect and we are left feeling lost and alone. The only solutions left seem to be birth control, accept an ablation, and at worst suffer through a hysterectomy.

My goal is that you finish this book with an understanding of your body, your hormones, and the potential blocks that may be affecting your health.

My writing style is a conversation. A connection. I want you to know that I am human too. I struggle with these issues and have found the solutions and my life is to share these. I am called to share my stories, knowledge, and ideas so you can understand your body, how it is working and why. You will know that you are not alone, that your pain is real, and what you have been told is 'normal' is actually common but definitely not normal or acceptable.

I want to provide you with tools that you can start using today. You will have the knowledge to see how you are living, eating, breathing, and moving are affecting your health and hormones and start implementing new ideas and strategies right away.

You can run this program on your own or work with me to find personalized answers and support. You can bring these ideas to your physicians and support team and ask for help.

To your health!  
Dr. Alison DiBarto Goggin

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# Introduction To Hormones

The conversation and product development around hormone control is consuming every woman I know. Girls as young as eight are being prescribed birth control because it is popular and doctors are wanting to get their body 'regulated' before they even start cycling. Ovarian failure is becoming common with 'no explanation' and hormones for menopause are being prescribed without testing. In a completely different perspective, women are told that their heavy periods are normal. That their depression, insomnia, and pain should just be treated with an anxiety medication. Women have shared their birth control horror stories with me and how they have been ignored and even kicked out of doctor's offices.

When I was in high school I struggled with endometriosis and ovarian cysts. Or at least I was told that this was my issue. This caused debilitating pain during my cycle and heavy periods that sent me home from school early. Like everyone else, I was prescribed birth control and antidepressants. Eventually, I had

exploratory surgery that surprisingly showed no endometriosis despite my horrific cycles. My pain went unexplained and untreated except for birth control for the next 10 years.

I had never had a normal pap smear since my first one at 15 years old. We never knew why, I wasn't diagnosed with HPV, but my doctor said we would monitor what was going on. When I was 25 I had a colposcopy, a procedure where the lesions on the cervix are removed, in an effort to control the abnormal lesions. When I left the office, I was told there wasn't anything I could do to prevent this and to just keep coming back for testing. The concept of 'we will keep testing until you have cancer and then treat the cancer' made no sense to me.

I took that year to treat myself with nutrition, herbs, and specific hormone support. When I returned for a follow up test, I was terrified of a cancer diagnosis. The fear actually kept me away longer than I wanted. At this appointment I had to sign a waiver that I refused treatment. The nurse circled DEATH and CANCER in big red pen and told me I would never be able to have more children. Two weeks later I received the results of my first normal pap smear and 10 months later I gave birth to my son.

After my son was born, I struggled with even more with my cycles. I called myself a vampire

because I would have drank blood to feel better. I was pale and stuck on the couch for at least 7 days during my period. Fatigue, anger, and sadness ruled my life. I was free for three weeks but that wasn't long enough to recover before the next cycle struck. Add in PMS, fatigue, moodiness I felt like a mess every day. I felt like nothing was helping and I was terrified I would have to live like this forever.

Fast forward through years of searching, learning, and trying everything I could get my hands on, I was finally able to bring my periods down to about three days. The pain and clotting is gone. I can use a menstrual cup and only change it once a day, instead of the three times per day like the years prior. I have minimal PMS symptoms, I am no longer spotting, and all aspects of my health have improved. I feel like I have my months and life back!

I share these stories because they are every woman's stories. Women don't know how to help their bodies heal or the options that are available to them and we are told the only options are birth control and surgery. My goal is to provide those options to you so you can focus on what is right for your body. I want you to know that you are not alone and healing is possible for you. You are not a prisoner to your cycle!

Hormone therapies will be worth \$28.4 billion by 2022, with estrogen replacement therapy dominating the treatment<sup>1</sup>. There was a 10-year study done on women finding that breast cancer, heart attacks, and strokes increased 30% due to prescribed synthetic hormones (Premarin, birth control)<sup>2</sup>.

After this study was released physician's stopped prescribing hormones by 79%. Which makes me stop and ask; does this mean that 79% of those women did not need intervention and hormones in the first place or were doctors broadly prescribing drugs based off symptoms without understanding how they work and the risks involved?

I share this because I am truly passionate about telling women they really need to understand what is going on with our bodies, focus on trusting themselves, and finding doctors you can trust as well. We need to understand the medications we are taking, how they work, the risks involved, and make truly informed decisions together as a team. Misogyny in the healthcare industry is so perverse that women are being turned away because they are told they are over emotional,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/press-release/global-hormone-replacement-therapy-market>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/files/docs/pht\\_facts.pdf](https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/files/docs/pht_facts.pdf)

just getting their period, or are perceived as weak. Women are dying during birth in America at the highest rates in first world countries, simply because their pain and complaints are ignored.

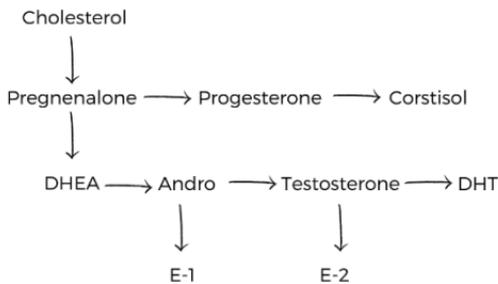
## **Hormone Basics**

Let's begin with understanding how hormones are created and work within our body. Hormones are chemical messengers that our body uses to send information to our cells so they can carry out orders. Our brain, thyroid, ovaries, pancreas, and adrenals all create hormones to signal to our cells and all of our cells have receptors to listen to our hormones. This is similar to a lock and key mechanism. For each hormone there is a receptor on the cell that allows it to lock in and talk to the cell. The cell will take that information and do their job such as which genes to use, to increase cell growth, or make energy. Once the cell has completed the action the hormone will be released back into the blood stream to be removed by the liver.

After we have enough of that hormone in our bloodstream, our cells are doing their job as instructed, a feedback loop is triggered to the brain to send fewer chemical messengers out, saying, "Hey, slow down. We don't need as much anymore." The brain and cells find that balance together based on hormone cycles,

stress, nutrition, and the demands from our cells.

We have 3 major sex hormones: estrogen (3 forms: estrone, estradiol, and estriol), progesterone, and testosterone that fluctuate through our cycle. These hormones are created by the ovaries and adrenal glands and regulate our menstrual cycle, fertility, mood, bone density, and much more.



Below is a chart of how hormones are created and converted. This chart is incredibly simplified for our simple conversation, there are a number of more hormones and enzymes within this chart. Every hormone begins as cholesterol and is converted to pregnenolone. Pregnenolone can be converted to either progesterone into cortisol or it can go the route to DHEA, androsenedione (andro) to estrone (E1), testosterone converts to estradiol (E2) and then finally at DHT. Estrogen has three types, E1, E2, and E3. This hormone is created in the ovaries as well as fat cells. Estrogen increases cell growth in the

breasts and uterine lining, it slows bone loss, and supports memory, emotions, mood, and sleep. Estrogen dominance symptoms include heavy bleeding, breast tenderness and cysts, headaches, low libido, lowered thyroid function, gallbladder congestion, and acne. Estrogen deficiency can cause hot flashes, reduced memory and brain function, vaginal dryness and pain, incontinence, and is linked to osteoporosis.

Progesterone is produced by the ovaries and adrenal glands. This hormone balances estrogen, prepares the body for pregnancy, stimulates the brain and nervous system, and builds bone. Progesterone dominance is linked to fatigue, increased yeast, depression, and ligament laxity. Lower levels of progesterone can cause PMS, heavy bleeding, memory impairment, insomnia, acne, and very similar symptoms to estrogen dominance.

Testosterone in women is also made by the ovaries and adrenal glands and supports energy, libido, and is protective against breast cancer. Increased levels of testosterone are related to acne, facial hair, and irritability. Lowered levels of testosterone can cause low libido, osteoporosis, decreased body hair, and feelings of weakness.

DHEA is the precursor for testosterone and E1 and E2. This hormone is important for

balancing stress, blood sugar, and body fat. DHEA deficiency can cause fatigue, impaired immunity, memory issues, lowered libido, and emotional swings. An increase in DHEA is similar to high testosterone and estrogen symptoms.

As you can see there are a variety of symptoms that can occur with changes in hormone balances. Testing is incredibly important to determining which hormones are in need of balancing, where the imbalance is coming from, and how to best address the issues. Testing will also help decrease the amount of time you spend treating your hormone imbalances because you are correctly addressing root causes.

The connection between the body, the brain, every organ, all of the cells, is really intricate and something that we really have to look at when discussing how to balance hormones. No cell or organ system can be left out of the discussion.

### Hormone Testing: Blood vs. Saliva

Functional medicine is known for testing to determine the exactly how your body is functioning to eliminate guessing and reduce the time of treatment. Saliva testing is one of my favorite ways to look at hormones because it really gives us an accurate look at what is

going on for that individual. For women who are cycling, we can do a full cycle saliva test that requires you to spit in a little tube every three days for the length of the whole menstrual cycle. This allows us to see the entire cycle of changing hormones, we can see if there are issues with the brain (hypothalamus and pituitary), the ovaries, adrenals, or in the cells. I often order a one or three day hormone test for women who are peri-menopausal or menopausal. For testing women who are cycling we can do the test on day 21 of your cycle knowing where your hormones should be with typical ratios and levels.

Blood tests are more convenient, more costly, and less helpful because they only look at that one point in time. If you don't know exactly where you are in your cycle, or you are not having a cycle, or taking hormone therapy, then it's not really an accurate picture and it does not give us insight to how your body is functioning over the whole cycle.

The biggest difference between blood and saliva testing is the form of the hormone that they are evaluating. Saliva testing can measure the levels of free hormones that are available to be used by the cells in the body. However, over 90% of hormones circulating in the blood stream are inactive, bound by a carrier protein, and are unable to act on cells until

needed. Saliva contains the unbound form of hormones to give us a better understanding of the levels of active hormones that are able to work in the body.

Another advantage of saliva testing is that you can do this in the privacy of your home or office, and you do not have to have a blood draw every three days or multiple times a day!

## Understanding Your Fertility Signs

The following is an excerpt from my book "The Joyful Pregnancy Workbook". This is an important section because it will help you understand how and why your hormones are cycling throughout the month. This will focus on women who are trying to get pregnant but the same information can be used as a natural birth control method, or just as a basic foundation of understanding how your hormones cycle.

I always recommend tracking every aspect of your lifestyle to understand your health, your body, and why you are feeling the way you do. Tracking allows you to correlate symptoms to discover what is triggering your body to react. With your cycle you can track and correlate your symptoms, mood, pain levels, digestive health, migraines, and libido. Compare this to your food and supplement tracking to really dive into how your body is functioning. You

will be surprised to see that your cycle drastically affects all of these areas or that your pain is related to something completely different. You won't know until you track!

The best starting place to understand your cycle are your fertility signs. Begin by charting your three basic fertility signs; waking basal temperature, cervical fluid, cervical position. We will review the basics of charting here, but do not use this as a solitary guide, especially if using this as a birth control method. Taking a class on using this method correctly or hiring a certified professional will help you recognize inconsistencies with your cycle and help you achieve pregnancy more quickly.

Women are often misguided about the physiology of their menstrual cycle. We are taught that our cycle lasts 28 days and we ovulate on day 14. When we are unable to become pregnant, we may jump to conclusions about our health, fertility, sexual ability, or even our partner while unknowingly we have different cycle times, lengths and signs and are miscalculating the day of ovulation. The best tool for improving fertility and your ability to conceive is education! Learning about your body, your cycle, and your hormones will only help you. Charting will decrease guessing times, reduce worry about fertility, and give your doctor a tool to work with your body to optimize fertility.

Our 'cycle' begins on day 1 of our period or when we bleed, not the last day of bleeding. A menstrual cycle can last anywhere from 3-10 days. Women ovulate, or release an egg from their ovary, anywhere from 10 days to even 30 days after their cycle begins. Lastly, the total number of days ranges variably from 20 to 40 days. There is no 'normal' cycle or definitive 'rules' to due dates and days of ovulation and the medically prescribed numbers are basically an average.

Healthy hormones fluctuate predictably during the cycle. On day one our hormones are all at a baseline low. Estrogen begins increasing and typically you start to feel better, clearer, and happier. The brain releases follicle stimulating hormone (FSH) in a small burst to prepare the ovaries to release an egg. Around day 14 there is a surge of luteinizing hormone (LH) that causes the ovary to release an egg. These hormones stimulate the release of an egg from the ovary, and also an increase in waking temperature. Estrogen peaks right before ovulation and then decreases as progesterone increases for the last half of the cycle and builds the lining of the uterus. If there is no pregnancy the progesterone levels will drop, causing your period to start.

Charting your fertility signs is one of the best ways to determine how your cycle and hormones are functioning. As previously

mentioned, the three major signs to track are waking basal temperature, cervical fluid, and cervical position. This is a completely different method than the rhythm method or methods that use any 28-day beaded bracelets. These methods require you to avoid intercourse or use alternative birth control means has passed. The temperature shift is due to an increase in the Luteinizing hormone (LH) that causes ovulation. The chances of becoming pregnant decrease steadily after your temperature change because you have already released the egg. The egg has now already started to travel and will not be able to be fertilized once out of the fallopian tubes. It is important to read and learn more about this technique. Not all women have the same temperature shifts and there can be many normal variations. Temperature changes will also show potential problems. The thyroid, adrenal, hypothalamus, pituitary, and ovaries have a large impact on the flow and function of hormones, and charting will help narrow down which organ is interfering with hormone signals.

Charting requires a number of months to identify a consistent pattern, if you have one, to achieve optimal fertility. Continue to chart over a number of months instead of relying on one or two charted months to make sure that

you are correctly identifying your cycle and ovulation days.

The second sign to track is your cervical fluid. Women's cervical fluid or vaginal secretions change over the month. After our period it can be non-existent or dry. As we near ovulation the fluid changes to become more egg-like, slippery and stretchy. This is not a vaginal infection but a way to assist sperm on their way to the egg. This type of fluid often shows up on underwear as a circle or more 'wet'. After ovulation the fluid can become thick and sticky and shows up on underwear as streaks and dry. Notice the changes and know that the slippery fluid is more likely to promote fertilization and is correlated with the time of ovulation.

Finally, the consistency and position of a woman's cervix changes over the course of her cycle. The cervix will become softer and more pliable during ovulation and also rise up further into the body. To check the position of the cervix you will insert one or two fingers vaginally until you can feel your cervix. Some women find squatting or laying on the floor is the most comfortable position. Some women are uncomfortable with monitoring this sign, others are not, so don't worry if you choose to skip this method. However, if you are not willing to check this sign make sure to monitor the other two diligently. Charting is important

because it can help you and your doctor discover hormone problems, thyroid disorders, and reasons why ovulation occurs or doesn't occur.

The main purpose of charting is to correlate your symptoms to determine the best time to plan intercourse during your ovulation. Track your signs for at least three months to have a good overview of how your body is functioning. Correlate all of your signs on a chart to determine your most fertile days. Now you know when to take the opportunity to conceive!

### How to maximize ovulation:

1. Intercourse should occur within the five days prior to date of ovulation and as close to the actual date of ovulation as possible. a. An egg can survive from 12 to 24 hours after being released and sperm can survive at most 5 days, which gives you anywhere from 1 to 6 days of a fertility window.
2. Limit intercourse to every other day, as opposed to every day so your partner can restore their sperm count to levels high enough to ensure conception.
3. Purchase an ovulation kit from your local drugstore. This is like a pregnancy test but can tell you the days you are ovulating and

correlate with your temperature and symptom chart.

4. If you lack cervical fluid, using a room temperature egg white as lubricant can assist the sperm. Store brand lubricants have the ability to kill or impede sperm, as well as saliva.

To ensure you are using a sperm-friendly brand check out [preseed.com](http://preseed.com) or [conceiveplus.com](http://conceiveplus.com) for more information.

### **Common Mistakes with charting:**

1. Stress will delay the timing of ovulation, and therefore delaying your period. If your period is late look back at your chart and notice if any events may have caused a delay in ovulation.

2. Drinking alcohol the night before will raise your temperature and give you a false elevation. Avoid drinking during the time of ovulation to pinpoint the exact day.

3. It is best to get more than three hours of sleep prior to taking your temperature. Achieving at least 7 to 9 hours is best for your body and for charting.

4. Take your temperature the same time every morning, including weekends.

5. Do NOT get up, go to the bathroom, stretch, do any movement prior to taking your temperature.

6. It is important to use a basal thermometer because they are much more sensitive to differences in temperature.

7. Regular periods do not mean that you are ovulating, or ovulating at the same time. Charting will eliminate this challenge. The next step from here is to start charting. You can download a free chart from [www.TCOYF.com](http://www.TCOYF.com) and write on it daily, chart on your computer or online with the available programs.

8. Use an app that relies on your temperature to give you an accurate reading of your ovulation day. Some apps do not require you to input your fertility signs and assume you ovulate in the middle of your cycle. This is never a good method of birth control!

Start charting your fertility signs to track changes now and find potential problems. Charting will also be important to track how your body is normalizing after using birth control and what new patterns your body will follow.

Visit

[www.LittleBlackBagMedicine.com/Hormone Guide](http://www.LittleBlackBagMedicine.com/HormoneGuide) to take the hormone quiz and learn more about your hormone type. This link will have all the resources mentioned throughout the book that you will need.

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# Foundational Hormone Health

In this chapter we will discuss digestion and how important a healthy gut is to healing your hormones. I can hear you now, *I thought we were talking about hormones not acid reflux?*

Improving digestion is where I begin with all of my patients. Digestion is the most important foundation we can focus on. You can change your diet, exercise, take supplements and have nothing in your body change because you aren't digesting, breaking down, absorbing nutrition from your food. Nutrients are not getting into your cells and your body cannot heal itself. Nutrition is about ingestion, digestion, absorption, assimilation and utilization of food not just about counting calories or macros.

After years of learning, searching, and experimenting with my hormone health, I realized that I had actually been chasing the wrong problem the entire time. My first clue was the 'failed' endometriosis surgery that never even found any signs of endometrial growth. As I was studying through

chiropractic college my health began to deteriorate and I felt constantly stressed and sick. Thankfully, I had some friends who helped me and we focused on healing my stomach, chronic acid reflux, bloating, and IBS. I realized the main problem with traditional medicine is that you walk into your doctor's office, having to tell them your problems that you diagnose yourself, you have 10 minutes, they only evaluate and treat that one area that you complain about and send you on your way. I had cramping in my abdomen, I assumed it was related to my cycles and uterus. My doctors accepted my diagnosis and 'treated' me with birth control and surgery.

I always wonder if someone had asked me how my gut health was during this time and how different the rest of my life and health would have been! Once I healed my digestive system, I no longer had that pain.

## Stomach: Acid Reflux and Hormones

Where does digestion start? It starts with chewing your food and allowing the enzymes in your saliva to start breaking down food. Have you ever heard a mom yell "Slow down! Your stomach doesn't have teeth!"?

It sounds incredibly simple but look around you the next time you are at a restaurant or have dinner with your family. We joke that waitresses always stop by the table when you have food in your mouth, but I will tell you as someone who has worked in restaurants that is rarely the case. Most people never stop eating the second the food is set in front of them. They are fork to mouth until the plate is clean.

You can immediately improve your digestion by focusing on simple actions such as chewing your food ten to thirty times per bite. Just start with noticing how many times you do chew before you swallow your food. Put your fork down between bites to slow down your intake of food. Pause and breathe between bites. Have a conversation with those around you and stop the race to finish.

Your stomach naturally has a high amount of acid and the pH is much lower than the rest of our body. Our stomach creates hydrochloric acid to work with enzymes to break down food. Most people lose their digestive power in their stomach first and find themselves bloated and suffering from acid reflux.

What prevents your stomach from creating enough acid to break down food correctly?

- ◆ Stress and emotions will shut down digestion

- ◆ Drinking too much liquids (water, soda, juice) during a meal
- ◆ Eating too quickly
- ◆ Not chewing our food thoroughly

When we feel stressed our body slows down creating stomach acid even if we are eating. The reason why this happens can be found in our autonomic nervous system, which has two segments: the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems.

The sympathetic system is known as the 'fight or flight' system. This controls upregulating your body and increasing its output, as well as how you respond to stress. For example, "There's a bear coming for me, and I need to run away." So, what are we going to do? Our pupils are going to dilate, we are going to get blood out of our extremities and close to our organs so we won't lose a lot of blood if we get attacked, and our heart starts racing. There is a symphony of hormones, including cortisol, that respond to this system.

What do we *not* need to do if a bear is coming to attack us? We do not need to digest food because it doesn't matter to our immediate survival. The food is just going to sit there until we can get up a tree or get away or until we calm down. We don't need to make babies if we're running away from a bear. You don't

have time to sit, relax, eat, and enjoy yourself. You have to get away.

These stressors don't look like bears in today's world. Stress looks like eating in the car on the way to work, late again. Fighting over the dinner table. Worry, emotional ups and downs, and loss of sleep are our bears. What is your bear that is keeping your body on high alert?

The second half of our autonomic nervous system is the parasympathetics. Stress will shut down the parasympathetics to allow the sympathetics (that fight or flight) to take over. We can only have one of these running on high at once.

We call the parasympathetics the 'wine and dine' part of our system which slows our body down when we are resting. This includes digestion, resting, healing, boosting the immune system, making babies, and making the right hormones. All of these processes happen when we are resting, when we are sleeping, and when we are recovering.

Now, when you are eating food and you're stressed out or you're angry or you're in the car and there's a traffic jam and you're eating really rushed, what's happening is that your sympathetics are kicking in and your stomach

acid is going down. You don't have enough acid or strength to digest your meal.

This is one of the most important things to understand about your digestive system: what do you get when you are stressed and not digesting? Acid reflux. Though this is not the traditional explanation you are accustomed to. When you cannot digest our food, you will experience heartburn. You are gaining weight because you cannot assimilate your food or your nutrition. This is the opposite of mainstream medicine that says if you have acid reflux you have too much acid, when now we can think through this and know that stress will decrease stomach acid. Food is now essentially rotting in your stomach, creating its own acid, and coming up as acid reflux.

A safe and easy way to test the lining of your stomach is to take two tablespoons of apple cider vinegar on an empty stomach twenty minutes before a meal. If you do not have any symptoms or side effects the lining of your stomach is intact and it is safe for you to take digestive enzymes. If you experience burning or symptoms you will need to have your stomach lining evaluated and you should avoid enzymes or hydrochloric acid supplements until you are cleared by your doctor.

An easy technique to improve your digestive power is to focus on calming your brain and your body before you eat. Take some deep breaths. Say a prayer. Really become present in your body so you can start taking in your parasympathetics and allow your digestion to perform at its best.

I like to do the four squared breathing method to center myself before eating. You can choose any numbered combination you want. The four squared means you take a deep breath in for a count of four. You hold it for four. You let your air out for a count of four. And then you hold it for four. Then repeat the cycle in groups of four.

The deep and calming breathing is what is going to jumpstart your parasympathetics and power up your digestion. Play with different breathing techniques the next time you eat.

Other stomach support tools:

- Stop using antacids as a calcium source and acid reducer: antacids are made from calcium carbonate which is alkaline (makes a good antacid) but neutralizes the very acid you need to absorb calcium and digest your food. This keeps you dependent on the tablets!

- Do not eat after 7pm. Your digestive power is typically lower later in the day.
- Keep drinks to a minimum 20 minutes before, during, and after eating to avoid diluting your stomach acid and enzymes.
- Take digestive enzymes with each meal (different from probiotics, read more below)

My husband is my go-to healing story about stomach pain and gut health. He had acid reflux for a very long time that started when he was in the military. His job was incredibly stressful, he wasn't allowed to take lunch breaks and if he did it was because someone brought the group fast food, so he ate. Our dinners were typically rushed, stressed, and we ended the night with beer and chips and salsa (they were organic and green!). I struggled with acid reflux as well. This struggle is what changed my life with essential oils when I was pregnant. I was eating a bottle of Tums a week and the enzymes and extra support I was taking wasn't working. I was unbelievably sick. I couldn't drink water without throwing up. I couldn't go to sleep because I couldn't lay down without acid shooting up my throat.

The only option I knew about was Tums until I got the digestive blend oil in my essential oil kit. I put it on my belly and I immediately had relief. I was able to stop taking Tums and I have never taken them again.

And then there was the day we ran out of antacids. My husband was going to go to Walgreens and I said *It's one o'clock in the morning. You cannot go do that right now. Go get the digestive oil and rub it on your belly.* And he's said, *Oh, that stuff doesn't work. You don't know what you're talking about.* I probably yelled, *Oh my God, no. Go get it or go sleep on the couch...*" How many of us have those stories with our husbands, right?

Of course, he came back and it worked. Once his stomach started to feel better, he was able to figure out what was causing the issues, which we've linked to chemicals in wheat, SIBO, and sugar. We have incorporated enzymes, probiotics, oils, and intestinal repair products and have found which protocols work for us individually and have worked diligently on improving our food choices and reducing stress.

### **What are digestive enzymes and how are they different from probiotics?**

Enzymes help our body break down food. Our body naturally creates these enzymes in our

liver, pancreas, small intestines but when we are in a stress mode or we're eating food that is not healthy for us or too heavy for us, our body stops producing as much enzymes that we need. The enzyme supplements will help our body break down the food since we cannot make enough on our own. Enzymes break down fats, carbs, proteins, and there are many different types of enzymes.

There are two main types of enzyme products. One will be a supportive and soothing blend that has aloe vera, peppermint, papaya and other herbs and foods. These blends are the best for reducing inflammation in the digestive system. The second type of product will contain actual enzymes such as lipase, protease, amylase, and hydrochloric acid. I prefer a combination of both. If you are not noticing a difference with your enzymes you might need more specific support.

Enzymes do NOT prevent your body from absorbing fats and carbs, like some horrible products on the market. Please break down and use your fat and carbs. Eating whatever you want and then blocking digestion and absorption is a recipe for disaster and destroying the lining of your gut. Your body needs fuel and limiting your body's resources will only destroy your health further. Enjoy your pizza and food without shame or guilt,

just increase your enzymes to support your digestion.

You can take one to two enzymes when you eat and with each meal. As your body starts to regenerate stomach cells in a healthy way, you might find that you need to take it before you eat. You might try taking it in the middle of when you eat. And you might need it afterwards. Experiment with that and see where that fits in for you.

You will immediately notice that you feel lighter, that gas and bloating can be a thing of the past, and the acid reflux will stop. If you do not notice a difference you haven't found the root cause of your symptoms yet.

I recommend the digestive enzyme complex from doTERRA, TerraZyme®. I have personally used and recommended this product for over seven years. This product is the basis of our foundational health program for hormones in the 90-day plan.

## Liver & Gallbladder: Psoriasis, Hemorrhoids, and Hormones

After our stomach completes digesting our foods with the help of our enzymes, the food moves down into our small intestine. From

there our bile and enzymes break down the food further. Our liver creates bile as a way to rid our body of excess hormones, toxins, and by-products and allows our body to move it out through our intestines. The bile also contains enzymes to break down fats and protein.

The gallbladder is a holding cell for the bile that the liver creates and has chemoreceptors, or chemical receptors, that are triggered by food and fat. When it is triggered, the gallbladder will release the bile alongside food to aid with digestion and also rid the body of what it doesn't need anymore.

If you don't have a gallbladder, which many women don't, you need to take digestive enzymes every time you eat and especially when you eat fat. Your liver is still making bile and it is putting it out directly into the intestines. But because the gallbladder is no longer there to store the bile, the probability of you eating and your liver going, "Let's make some bile," and it meeting up at the same time to digest your food is almost impossible. You always will have to take a digestive enzyme with food. Sometimes women even have to go a step further and take ox bile, which is cow bile, because it will help digest the food right away. This is for you especially if you have trouble with greasy foods or even healthy fats like coconut oil.

Why do women always seem to need their gallbladders removed? There is a negative cascade of hormone overload, liver congestion, and IBS issues where the body cannot process and move bile. The liver becomes backed up from toxins, hormones, and is lacking nutrition to be able to transform waste.

The liver helps process out excess hormones, and as our body is making hormones, our cells use them up and they break them down, it goes back into our bloodstream to our liver. The liver puts it in this pretty package (known as conjugation and biotransformation), and it sends it into our gallbladder. Normally, the gallbladder will release the bile with the waste, then we eliminate our toxins along with the stool. But when the gallbladder becomes inflamed the bile will crystalize and form stones.

What happens if your gallbladder becomes backed up or you have gallstones or your liver is not functioning right? Your liver will become congested and unable to package up hormones for release. Many times, the hormones just go back into circulation. This happens with leaky gut as well, where the hormones are able to pass between the intestinal cells and go back into the blood stream. The body does not want excess hormones and will package them away in fat cells. This feeds the next problem where

an increase in estrogen will increase the number of fat cells in the body. Fat cells produce estrogen that the body cannot clear causing estrogen and fat to build up in the body. This is why it can be painfully difficult for women to release weight and body fat.

Women who have MTHFR gene mutations, high estrogen levels, infertility, and those reaching menopause are especially at risk. The liver requires methyl groups to be able to package up or conjugate hormones but if you aren't able to conjugate the problem will not resolve on its own. Additional support, nutrition, and monitoring is required.

All of these reasons are why I start every conversation with digestion and improving liver function. Improving your liver function will help you release weight because your body will be able to clear out what it doesn't need.

Symptoms related to the liver:

1. Psoriasis: skin issues are typically related to the gut or liver. If you aren't seeing results with your skin by treating your gut, focus on your liver.
2. Hemorrhoids: when the liver backs up the veins will start to swell. This causes hemorrhoids and can be easily treated by

supporting the liver. Collinsonia root is my go-to herb.

3. Gallbladder/right side pain: Liver back up and you need a cleanse and Terrazyme with food

4. Acne: Clear your hormone pathways through the liver first so you can heal your hormones and clear up acne.

5. Pain on the right side, under the ribs: Your liver can cause pain and checking for fatty liver can help you decide why it is painful.

A favorite product I use to support the liver are TerraGreens® from doTERRA. There are many greens products on the market but this one actually tastes great! You can add a scoop to your smoothie or put it directly in your water.

The TerraGreens® and real-life greens like salads, will help bind to excess hormones in your liver and gut and help them pass through your gut without recirculating into your bloodstream. Women who have estrogen dominance, which is linked to heavy bleeding, clotting, PMS issues, weight gain in the hips and the thighs, greens will pull that excess estrogen out and make it really easy for your body and your liver to turn it over. When you can support your gallbladder with enzymes to

start flowing bile correctly all those hormones will conjugate and release faster.

Add in some fiber, either in a supplement or foods, to help bind hormones in your gut to stop them from recirculating in your body.

Geranium is one of my favorite oil for the liver, you can add it to an empty capsule and take as a supplement or simply apply to your liver on the right side of your ribs.

You can find my full protocol with oils and supplements in the last chapter

## Intestinal Health and Estrogen

So far we have covered the stomach and how enzymes will support digestion, through to the small intestine where our liver and gallbladder continue breaking down food and transforming hormones. There is much more at play that includes the pancreas, insulin, etc but to keep things simple and female hormone focused we will move on to the intestines.

You're probably thinking, "Well, how *does* my intestines relate to hormones?"

Your IBS (typically alternating constipation and diarrhea, some experience just one or the other but severely) might be triggered by your

upper GI (stomach and gallbladder) not digesting fully and leaving food that is irritating your gut. Your bile might be sluggish and thick, your hormones flying through and on top of that the intestinal cells are pulling apart, aka, leaky gut, and you cannot break the cycle.

We can do stool testing for leaky gut, inflammation, check your diversity, and look for parasites, the balance of harmful and supportive bacteria, and candida.

Stool testing also measures beta-glucuronidase levels. This is an enzyme created by bacteria in the gut such as E. Coli, clostridia, and strep. These enzymes directly impact your hormones because they will recirculate toxins, estrogen, and other steroid hormones, pesticides, and carcinogens. As we discussed in the liver section, the phases of liver detoxification package up our hormones to be excreted by the body. When the harmful bacteria in the intestines interact with this package it will deconjugate, or break apart, the toxins, hormones, and allow them to enter back into the blood stream. Increased levels of beta-glucuronidase are associated with colon cancer and breast cancer. Low levels of this enzyme are associated with lowered levels of vitamin D, thyroid hormones, and estrogen as well. Essentially, it is important to TEST before taking anything to lower or raise your levels of

any enzyme. We need a balanced and healthy gut to have healthy hormones. The program outlined in this book will help both balance the negative and positive bacteria levels in your gut and balance your level of beta-glucuronidase.

Our small intestines do not have a large number of bacteria in them, because they focus on digestion and absorbing of nutrients from our food. Some people have an overgrowth of bacteria in their small intestines, known as SIBO. A breath test will determine if SIBO is an underlying cause for your digestive issues. The most recognizable symptom of SIBO is that eating sugar or carbohydrates causes gas (bloating, acid reflux, or intestinal gas) quickly after eating. SIBO symptoms are generally not responsive to enzymes and even worsen with probiotics.

On the other hand, if you are gassy and bloated about three to four hours after you eat, that could be a sign of you're not digesting your proteins and your fats really well. You would benefit from taking enzymes with additional bile or lipase, hydrochloric acid, and even increasing the number that you take.

When we discuss probiotics there is a general sense that the highest level of probiotics in a supplement means that it is the best. The goal is not to find the probiotic with 800 trillion

cells and 2 strands. The goal is to find the probiotic with the strands that work for your body. Reach the back of each label and look for diversity or strains you haven't tried before.

Everybody's body is different. Every body's flora is going to be different. So, if you've tried probiotics in the past and you haven't noticed better digestion, less bloating, weight loss, a better immune system, or even improved mood, depression, anxiety try a different probiotic.

Probiotics aren't just awesome, they are very necessary for many, many people because our gut has 80% of our immune system living within it. Our intestines have a separate nervous system, which means all of the chemicals that are in our brain, like serotonin and dopamine, are also made in our intestines. When we say, "Oh, I have that gut feeling," it's not a thing we're making up. It is a real serotonin rush inside of our gut. The more you could take care of the health of your intestines, the better the health of your whole body.

Obviously, the better your intestines are doing, the better you're going to be able to have bowel movements. I love talking about poop, friends. You're just going to have to deal with it. Okay? Your hormones are going to be cycling better. You're going to be able to remove excess toxins, pesticides, and

environmental triggers. Everything's going to be feeling better.

One of the most common gut contributors to hormone issues is candida, which is a yeast overgrowth. Normally we associate yeast with vaginal yeast infections, but candida lives in our body naturally. The yeast should be in a good balance and when it is imbalanced, we have issues such as chronic fatigue, migraines, skin rashes, eczema, and poor digestion. Basically, all of the hormone symptoms that you may be convinced is your thyroid or estrogen, could actually be candida as well. Candida is also closely associated with hypoparathyroidism, hypothyroidism, diabetes, autoimmune issues, infertility, and adrenal fatigue. If you have used birth control in the past you have a higher probability of chronic yeast overgrowth because the hormones suppress the entire immune system, overload the liver and gut and create a good environment for yeast to grow.

When we test for yeast as a contributing factor, we can use either a questionnaire or a stool test. This test tells us the level of parasites and yeast, bacteria, viruses and how we can treat it because it will test that against a pharmaceutical as well as herbals. With yeast you may notice that you have bowel

issues, IBS type issues, depressed immune function or that you are chronically sick. Another common sign is chronic sinus infections. Nails, hair, and skin is where candida tends to live excessively and this contributes to symptoms of thrush, brittle nails, and dandruff.

To reduce yeast right away you can reduce the amount of sugar and carbs that you're eating. Reducing sugar will support your whole body and starve the yeast off of their diet of sugar. Women who crave beer are craving that yeast because the yeast wants to have a bigger party.

Testing and treating for food sensitivities will help reduce inflammation and immune overload. Some prefer to do an elimination diet for two weeks. This involves only eating vegetables and fruits, mostly raw and some steamed. There is no room for grains, dairy, or processed foods. After the two-week period you can slowly add in new foods and evaluate how you feel and how your body reacts.

I prefer to run a blood test because it is simpler than doing an elimination diet, you might be sensitive to fruits and vegetables (most people are to a few), and the most important reason why is because we catch delayed food reactions. Not all food sensitivities manifest immediately with a headache or stomach pain.

The immune system may take time to recognize and react to a food, typically about three days. A blood test will help you determine exactly which foods are causing the issue without question.

**Extra Gut Support:**

- ◆ L-Glutamine
- ◆ Zinc
- ◆ Collagen powder
- ◆ Bone broth
- ◆ Licorice Extract
- ◆ Fennel Seed
- ◆ Aloe vera
- ◆ Slippery Elm
- ◆ Marshmallow

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# Thyroid, Adrenals, and Stress

Visit [www.LittleBlackBagMedicine.com/HormoneGuide](http://www.LittleBlackBagMedicine.com/HormoneGuide) to take the Thyroid Vs. Adrenal Quiz and see which organ system is the most affected in your body.

Alex called me for a consultation after her gynecologist told her the only option she had for her heavy periods was an ablation. An ablation is a surgical intervention where the lining of the uterus is destroyed or burned. This can stop the heavy flow during a period or stop periods completely. Alex told me that her periods were extremely long, lasting over 7 days, and were very heavy. She was bleeding through a super tampon every hour. Her doctor told her that was 'normal' and not to worry. She wanted to avoid the surgery because she knew that the ablation would just cover up the symptoms and not fix the underlying problem.

During her time working with me she completed a saliva hormone test and we found her estrogen was very high and her cortisol levels were not lowering during the day. I put her on a personalized program to balance her

hormones, support her brain, and help her body cycle hormones normally. Within three months her period was significantly lighter, she was using two tampons per day. Her cycle only lasted 4 days and she was able to lose fifteen pounds.

This is possible for you too!!

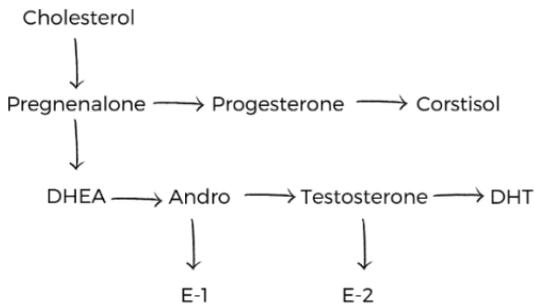
### Adrenals, stress, and belly fat

In this chapter we are going to open up our view of hormones, how they interact, and how stress impacts every area of your body.

As we discussed in the first chapter, all of our hormones start with cholesterol as their base. Cholesterol is very important for our body and we need good and healthy fats in order to make healthy hormones. This is why I always recommend adding in healthy fats to your diet as well as the omega supplements for women who have hormone issues, because all of our hormones are made out of fat and cholesterol. Without cholesterol, we cannot make hormones!

Looking at the cascade or pathway of our hormones the first conversion begins with cholesterol, which is converted into pregnenolone. From pregnenolone, it goes

down to make progesterone, testosterone and the three types of estrogen. There are quite a few extra hormones between these steps but we took them out here to simplify.



What happens when we are super stressed all day long, and we don't sleep, we don't eat right, and our blood sugar is on a roller coaster, and we get in the car and we're stressed with traffic, we get home, we're stressed with the kids, and then we are staying up too late with television and snacks? I feel overwhelmed just writing this.

Remember that stress will increase your sympathetic nervous system to run the fight or flight patterns and shut down digestion and hormone processes. Stress requires additional cortisol that is produced by your adrenals. As you can see from the chart that all of our hormones begin with cholesterol and we have a limited source of cholesterol and fat in our system at any given time.

When our body is unable to keep up with a balanced hormone production due to stress, we experience what is known as 'Pregnenolone Steal'. This is a complex hormone relationship but it explains how stress can affect all of your hormones.

As your cortisol demand continues your body begins to shift hormone production from testosterone and estrogen into progesterone and cortisol. This essentially 'steals' or borrows the building blocks of hormones to increase your cortisol with the result of imbalanced hormones.

Managing cortisol and stress is a top priority so you can convert all of your hormones in a healthy way without draining your cells and adrenals.

Supporting adrenal fatigue and stress is mainly associated with 'self-care'. Things like taking baths, meditating, and taking time away from work. I agree that self-care and slowing down is incredibly important but I would rank those behind blood sugar balance, improving nutritional deficiencies, clearing the gut and liver, emotional/psychological support, and then specific adrenal care.

My adrenal support is ordered this way because the lifestyle and physiological triggers

of adrenal fatigue need to be addressed before focusing on healing the adrenals as an organ or hoping that relaxing and time off is enough to balance your body. You can take ashwagandha and licorice all day long but if your blood sugar is unstable and is constantly triggering your adrenals, the herbs will not be helpful and you will feel worse. If your immune system is depleted, your gut is inflamed, your liver is congested and unable to clear hormones, and these continually are triggering your adrenals to be in overdrive to compensate and provide energy, herbs and bone broth aren't going to be the cure for you.

I truly believe that this is why so many adrenal programs fail. The foundations of health are ignored as we are told to jump into the adrenal fatigue pool and blame the adrenals for every symptom instead of addressing the whole body and lifestyle.

Cortisol is a fantastic hormone that has been demonized. Cortisol suppressants are available in every nutrition and health store claiming that it will 'reduce stress levels' (only you and your mind can reduce your stress levels), 'improve your sleep by lowering cortisol levels' (cortisol should be low when you fall asleep but it will naturally and normally raise at night to feed your brain and

help you wake up in the morning, reducing cortisol all night will affect your entire wakeup cycle and day!), and 'help you lose weight' (lowering cortisol will help you lose weight only when you balance your blood sugar and inflammation levels.

Knowing where your cortisol levels are during the day is an important step in addressing your adrenal health. Herbs such as licorice can have a negative impact on your adrenal health depending on the level and flow of your cortisol. Saliva testing is the best option for adrenal testing because it measures the free cortisol throughout the day in four to five different samples. With blood testing your cortisol is measured only once and if you experienced any stressful triggers before the blood draw such as traffic, fear of needles, or trying to get out of work, you don't know if your cortisol was stable or not as it fluctuates so easily throughout the day. You would also need to have your blood drawn throughout the day and evening. Saliva is the ideal and best way to measure your cortisol throughout the day.

At the beginning of the day your cortisol will be high as a response to your brain needing sugar and fuel during the night. The next chapter will give you more insight into sleep,

blood sugar, and insomnia. As the day goes on your cortisol levels will naturally lower so in the evening you can fall asleep easily. Stress and blood sugar will be the main influencers of how cortisol is elevated or reduced during your day. Any pattern is possible and testable through saliva analysis, it can be high all day, spike in the afternoon or evening, or low all day. You won't know how to accurately treat and support your adrenal health until you have the test completed.

From there you will be able to understand how to start treating and supporting your health. You will know if you need brain support, adrenal support, to look at your thyroid, to manage pregnenolone steal, or if you need more nutritional support to create healthier hormones. The possibilities are many and testing will help you narrow down what the most important steps for your health care.

Lastly, if you find that your body is not responding to your adrenal support plan you may need more specific organ support. When the brain is constantly exposed to cortisol in the bloodstream due to stress, inflammation, insulin dysregulation, etc, the hypothalamus and pituitary can lose sensitivity to the cortisol and eventually the body will begin to destroy brain cells in the hippocampus (part of the

brain that involves memory, emotion, and spatial awareness). This increases the amount of cortisol in the bloodstream because the brain has lost sensitivity and continues to signal for more. Which creates a vicious cycle of increasing cortisol, brain and neuron destruction, desensitization, and increasing cortisol. This pattern explains why traditional adrenal treatment does always respond or allow your adrenals to stabilize and how memory loss is often related to stress and fatigue. To support this cycle, specific glandular and nutritional care will help restore the cells of the brain and adrenals.

After we address blood sugar, liver and gut health, nutritional deficiencies, and testing, we can discuss self-care and habits that will support your recovery. Epsom salt baths, essential oils, meditation, and therapy are all extremely important in your health and recovery. Processing past traumas, relationships, and building a tool kit to manage current stress is a mainstay for my referrals in my practice. Addressing every area of your life, health, and emotions is integral to healing.

## **Belly fat, losing weight, and symptoms of unhealthy cortisol**

Typically, weight carried around the belly is due to cortisol and estrogen. Adrenal stress and dysfunction (whether working too much or fatigued) will impact cortisol level, contribute to insulin resistance, and leptin resistance as well as increasing cholesterol levels.

Food sensitivities, even minor ones place the adrenals in a chronic stress response. This stress response lowers your immune system and ability to fight infections, destroys the lining of your gut, and can even lead to the destruction of the brain.

Leptin is a hormone that regulates fat storage and works with the brain to manage hunger levels. With long term stress, there is an increase in cortisol, insulin, and cholesterol. The combination of the prolonged increase of these hormones cause the brain (hypothalamus and pituitary glands) to become resistant to the leptin hormone, and increase hunger, fat cells, and insulin resistance. Which then increases estrogen and cortisol levels contributing to the increase in weight and distribution of fat around the belly and even hips and thighs. This is another vicious cycle that can be difficult to manage.

The brain, adrenals, and even sensitivity of fat cells must be addressed through a personalized program.

Leptin resistance is not the only factor to blame for difficulty losing weight, so please don't jump to conclusions and assume that this alone is the issue for you. Always start with the basic foundations of blood sugar, eating healthy and improving your digestive function. Over time you can continue testing and treatment to determine what is the true underlying cause for your body carrying extra weight.

Weight loss is a complicated issue for women. Women take longer to release weight than men, they have more factors that impact how their body responds to exercise and food changes, and a changing hormone cycle impacts their body in a different way every day. Inflammation disrupts hormone patterns making any changes have a slower result until the inflammation is managed.

Here are some causes and solutions of belly weight:

- Estrogen: clear your liver and detox
- Cortisol: manage stress, oils, nutrition, sleep

- Post-Pregnancy/weight loss: Diastasis recti needs to be evaluated by a physical therapist

- Inflammation and leaky gut: heal your gut and test for food sensitivity

Weight loss is a complex issue and shouldn't be the main focus for your health. When weight loss doesn't occur easily with food changes and exercises that means there is an organ system that needs support, NOT that you are doing something wrong!

## Holistic Thyroid Healing

Holistic thyroid healing is a topic that I love to talk about because so many women come to my office and they are convinced they have a thyroid problem, or they know they have a thyroid problem, but they are told that their blood work is 'normal'. You probably have found that your blood work results are normal according to traditional medical standards and you have been told nothing is wrong, but you check every single symptom on the thyroid health questionnaires.

The first issue to address is that lab ranges for blood work are very wide and diagnosis of thyroid issues are only made when the lab

ranges are finally extreme enough to warrant intervention. Functional medicine recommends smaller lab ranges to show the physiological normal levels, a middle range that shows when there is an issue developing that can be supported before it becomes abnormal, and then the abnormal or medical end values where intervention is required.

Another concern, similar to the blaming the adrenals for all the problems, is that we are too quick to blame the thyroid for weight gain and irregular periods. Many times, I find women are experiencing all of the thyroid symptoms, but it lies within lifestyle, stress, and their relationships. This is essentially what inspired and motivated me to write my first book “Healing The Woman Within”.

In this section we are going to discuss symptoms, different body systems and organs that are affected and related to the thyroid, and what we need to be addressing outside of the thyroid. I will share some information about blood work and what to look and ask for from your doctor.

Women initially believe that they have thyroid symptoms because they are extremely tired. It is very difficult to lose weight when you have thyroid issues because your metabolism is slowed down and your cells are not given the

instructions they need to fully operate. Your gut health is impaired and sluggish leading to leaky gut. With true thyroid dysfunction you will have extreme fatigue, your hair becomes really brittle and falls apart, especially for women who are post-partum. Another key thyroid symptom is when you are missing the outer third of the eyebrow or it becomes extremely thin. Physicians often look at a woman's face and body type and be able to diagnose them with a thyroid issue before blood work confirms their suspicions.

Other common symptoms include cold hands and feet and low libido. Where this becomes complicated is that these symptoms are also correlated to blood sugar issues, candida, food allergies, fatigue, and low blood pressure. We end up with this list of symptoms that cover a wide range of body organs and systems that can be fatigued, non-responsive, and our goal becomes to address which ones need the most attention.

Let's not be quick to blame the thyroid and instead focus on the whole body. This is when we begin to see the big picture and notice a convergence of diseases. The goal is to determine which one of these body systems are malfunctioning to then treat that system to support the other ones. Some additional

symptoms and systems that make us consider thyroid are gastrointestinal disfunction, detoxification disfunction, stress, immune, nutrition, hormones, and environmental factors and toxins. My big question for my patients is why do those systems converge and which one is the most likely true root cause?

When you get my paperwork for my functional medicine consultations, and any functional medicine office, they are about 28 plus pages long. Most people say my doctor has never asked me any of these questions and discussed their history with them. We ask these questions because we have to know everything that's going on in the body. Remember our thyroid is not a 'stand-alone' organ. It's not off doing its own thing, sending out hormones hoping it works.

The brain (hypothalamus and pituitary) begins the hormone cascade to communicate with the thyroid, and then the thyroid releases hormones based on what the brain perceives the body as needing. The pituitary releases thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH) which causes the thyroid to release T3 and T4. TSH is the main, and sometimes the only blood test that physicians offer, instead of looking at the entire thyroid panel. There are about eight other markers for the thyroid that we can do

and put them all together to see a bigger panel and picture.

The thyroid then makes two hormones, which are T4 and T3. This is an involved and complicated process, so in this book I am breaking it down for you in the most simplistic terms and pathways so we can focus on the support section. After your thyroid creates these hormones, the T4 is actually inactive and it has to go to your liver to be converted to an active form. Then the rest of those hormones go to your intestines to be activated and converted. The newly converted hormones then go back out into the body and interact with our cells. We have to evaluate if your cells are healthy and available to accept and use the hormones that they interact with. You can see with this cascade, configuration and changing of hormones, that we cannot just ask what the TSH level is alone, we have to consider the liver, gut health, and cellular health.

For example, if your liver is overwhelmed with medications or drugs, alcohol, stress, hormones, or toxins, it will not be able to convert the thyroid hormones. Or if your liver does not have the nutritional foundations to be able to function, it will not be able to convert hormones consistently. If your gut is

compromised by inflammation then it cannot convert hormones. Our intestines can be compromised by what seems like everything in our environment and food. I know it's frustrating because every time I write a book or teach a class, I basically start talking about the gut first. Oh you have thyroid problems? Fix your gut. You have auto immune problems? Fix your gut. You have migraines? Fix your gut. Fix your gut. Fix your gut.

But if we don't address the gut first, then nothing you try will work. Your hormones cannot convert. You cannot digest and absorb food. Your brain's not going to release hormones at the correct levels because the feedback loops are not communicating.

After these hormones are through the liver and gut and are able to work with the cells, they create this feedback system to the brain to say "we have enough hormones or we need more". This becomes a cycle and we call it the HPT cycle (hypothalamus, pituitary, thyroid). When you just look at one number, such as your TSH on your blood work, and you are told 5.2 is 'normal' this means that your thyroid is not functioning well and the pituitary is sending out more hormones to activate the organ. However, from a functional standpoint, 5.2 is actually a big sign that there's a

metabolic syndrome going on as well as hypothyroid issues.

With all functional medicine cases, we have to figure out where the issues are coming from. Is it coming from the hypothalamus? Is it coming from the pituitary? Is it showing because your liver is not converting? Is it coming from your gut because your gut is so overwhelmed that it cannot process and change those hormones over so your body can get the work and function like it's supposed to? Is something happening with the cells not being able to accept the thyroid hormones and do their job?

This is the functional medicine paradigm to step back and look at the whole body, every system, and see how they interact. Specialized medicine has a different physician for every body system and many times no one agrees on which system is the root cause. When you look at the body as a whole, and blood work as a whole, you are able to see patterns that reveal the convergence of diseases and see how you can best support your body to heal.

Another factor to consider is that high TSH numbers will actually increase your cholesterol levels, meaning hypothyroid is often linked to cholesterol levels. But what if your doctor says your thyroid is normal but your cholesterol is bad and you need to lose

weight? They will most likely just give you drugs for the high cholesterol. Well, the cholesterol is not the source of the problem. The cholesterol is a symptom of the thyroid not working. Our number one priority then becomes supporting the thyroid and brain to work, which will then lower the cholesterol levels and not just say the harmful phrase “you just need to lose weight and exercise”, because a diet has nothing to do with your cholesterol levels if your thyroid is compromised and affecting your liver and gallbladder.

The traditional laboratory and medical ranges for TSH are .4 to 5, this is considered normal. The functional ranges vary but are about 1.2 to 2.2. This is a very big difference when your TSH levels are 4.2, you have all of the symptoms but you are told you are still ‘normal’. Functionally we would say that you are hypothyroid and need to find the reason why.

Estrogen imbalance is another factor that will impact thyroid function. An increase in estrogen will cause the liver to increase thyroid binding globulin, which basically pulls out all the active thyroid hormones that are circulating in our body. This is known as functional hypothyroidism because there is not a true physiological concern with the

thyroid. You might have symptoms of low thyroid, but it's actually coming from high estrogen. The focus then becomes to release the excess estrogen out of your body and support hormone cycling correctly.

Going back to the first chapter, an easy way to monitor your adrenal and thyroid health is taking your morning metabolic temperature. With thyroid issues, your temperature will typically be very low, somewhere between 96.3° and 97.2°. Ideally, your morning temperature should be mid-97s to high-97s at the beginning of your cycle. When you ovulate, your temperature will spike and stay high. In the second half of your cycle a temperature around 98.6° would be best. Taking your morning temperature throughout the month can help you discover if your thyroid may be impacting your hormone health. If you have a low functioning thyroid or true hypothyroidism, you're going to have stable but low temperatures.

Adrenal types, people with low adrenal function, will have variable temperatures. Adrenal types are hot in the heat and cold in the cold, whereas thyroid patients tend to always be cold. When you take your temperature in the morning and you have adrenal issues, you will see a wider variation

in the degrees. It may only be .3 or .5 difference, but when you plot it on a chart or in an app, you will notice how big of a difference there is on a day to day. Generally, if you are seeing a .4° and a higher temperature in the morning, that typically means an adrenal issue. Look at your chart and remember if the temperature is very low, that may indicate thyroid issues. If the temperature is unstable that may indicate an adrenal dysfunction.

In my opinion, monitoring temperatures does not replace traditional thyroid blood tests and saliva adrenal testing, but it is a great place to start at home and documenting your cycles to discuss with your physician.

The moral of this chapter: do not settle for hearing “your TSH is fine. Don't worry about it. You don't have thyroid issues. You just need to lose weight.” You now know that is not the answer. The answer is what's going on with all of these numbers? What's going on with your estrogen? And your toxins? And your blood sugar? And candida? Do you have a gut infection? Do you have leaky gut? Let's take a look at all of that and see how your body's truly functioning.

## Xenohormones, Toxins, Pollutants

Another aspect to consider when addressing the thyroid and hormones in general, is toxicity levels, exogenous hormones, and xenohormones. Toxins overload the liver, they affect how the thyroid makes hormones, and how it releases hormones. They affect how those hormones are transported through the blood and how those hormones are metabolized. Toxins will affect gut health and alter thyroid antibodies. Environmental toxins actually increase the number of thyroid antibodies that are made in your body and blocks iodine uptake.

The most common overload comes from our makeup. How many different types of product do you use on your face alone before leaving the house in the morning? Unless you are using a brand that is free of questionable ingredients, you are exposing your body every day to products that disrupt your hormones.

It may seem extreme, but this is not something where today you woke up, you put on makeup, and your thyroid died. This is a lifetime of exposure from the same routines. This is when you tell me “but the FDA only allows a small amount of (name your favorite chemical) into toothpaste and makeup. Those levels actually

cannot harm you. This conversation about toxins is so ridiculous". You are correct about the very low levels of chemicals or synthetics in products. The issue is that you never use just one product. One morning might consist of shampoo, conditioner, soap, shaving cream, face and body lotion, toothpaste, mouthwash, and 15 different makeup products. This all adds up and was only the first thirty minutes of your day! We still have to talk about exposure from air, water, food, and environmental exhaust. The more you can focus on using products in your home and on your body that reduce the exposure to exogenous hormones and endocrine disrupters, the faster your hormones will balance.

*"There is substantial evidence indicating that endocrine disruptors contribute to the risk of cancer, developmental problems, diabetes, and possibly also obesity and the metabolic syndrome. Also, it seems highly likely that endocrine disruptors can contribute to infertility and subfertility. That is why both the Endocrine Society [153] and the American Chemical Society [371] (with 161.000 chemical scientists and engineers as members, the world's largest scientific society) recently issued scientific statements on endocrine disruption...The Endocrine Society stresses the importance of the*

*precautionary principle in the absence of direct information regarding cause and effect and considers the principle to be critical to enhancing reproductive and endocrine health. The American Chemical Society recommends more Green Chemistry research aimed at identifying and developing functional alternatives that do not have endocrine-disrupting activity. It remains, however, very difficult to determine which substances, at which point in time and at which concentrations, actually increase risk. Implementing the physical-chemical hygiene is in this context certainly indicated.”<sup>3</sup>*

The above statement and meta-analysis (reference below) on the impact of endocrine disrupting chemicals and their effects on cancer, hormones, diabetes, fertility, and much more truly shows how severe the concern of how xenohormones affect human health. There is no debate on the impact of these pervasive chemicals in our environment and the rise in disease.

Returning to our thyroid conversation, iodine is the nutrient that our thyroid utilizes to create hormones. Our salt has been iodized because too many people were not getting

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<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3443608/>

enough iodine in their diet from processed foods. However, if you are struggling with thyroid issues iodine is not always the answer. Iodine can actually suppress thyroid function if you are taking in too much in your diet or supplements.

One of the reasons we need additional iodine is because toxins (as a general term), endocrine disruptors, and xenohormones are displacing the iodine and disrupting our hormone pathways.<sup>4</sup> Pesticides, chemicals used in plastics, and chemicals found in our food, body care products, and cleaning products are the most common endocrine disruptors. Endocrine disruptors mimic our estrogen, raise testosterone in women (and estrogen in men) and this is how these compounds affect fertility and menopause. But they also affect our liver, increase fat stores, and affect our bone strength and immune system.

Endocrine disrupters are a major factor when balancing hormones. There are no requirements for companies to label their

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<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5936967/>

products as they are protected by proprietary trade secret legislation.

These disruptors can be xenoestrogens that look like our human estrogen, and they sit in the cell receptors and the body cannot get rid of them quickly enough. This causes fertility issues, cancers, miscarriage, menstrual issues, early puberty, and many other health complications.

Our food, water, air, medicine, makeup, personal care products all contain harmful chemicals. Our first priority is to remove our exposure as much as possible by switching to green cleaning and personal care products. Then focusing on liver support, drinking purified water, and cleaning the air in the home with plants or a purifier.

EWG estimates that water supplies serving 218 million Americans – more than two-thirds of the population – contain unsafe levels of chromium-6 and the Erin Brockovich chemical ([www.ewg.org](http://www.ewg.org)).

Chromium is a naturally occurring element but can also be manufactured. The two main types are chromium-3, an essential human nutrient considered to be mostly harmless, and chromium-6, which has long been known to cause lung cancer when airborne particles

are inhaled. Recent science has also shown that, when ingested, it can cause stomach cancer. Chromium-6 is used in chrome plating, wood and leather treatments, dyes and pigments, and the water in cooling towers of electrical power plants.

The biggest offender in daily life is utilizing plastics in cooking and drinking water. BPA in plastic binds to the thyroid receptor of our cells and causes neurological and endocrine issues<sup>5</sup>. However, since BPA was banned companies have switched to an even more harmful chemical, BPS. We think that we are doing better for our body and brain when we buy “BPA Free products” but we have actually switched to a more harmful chemical. <sup>6</sup> The best action you can take is to stop using plastic completely. Minimize buying foods that are pre-packaged in plastic including vegetables and fruit. Never heat up plastic in the microwave including vegetable packs that are ‘designed’ for the microwave. When plastic is heated it will release its chemicals into the food or liquid that is in the container. You are putting all of that chemical and plastic into your broccoli and then eating it. These

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12414890>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/bpa-free-plastic-containers-may-be-just-as-hazardous/>

chemicals then build up in your liver, fat, and disrupt all of your hormones.

Scorecard.org you can get an in-depth pollution report for your zip code and report for your county, covering air, water, chemicals, and more. Testing your body to see what chemicals, natural and synthetic, is very simple. I recommend Great Plains Laboratory's Organic Acids Test and Chemical Profile test. These are urine tests that look at 172 different environmental pollutants, pesticides, and harmful compounds all from a single urine sample.

Supporting your body to eliminate environmental toxins is a multi-step process. Obviously limiting your exposure to them comes first, clearing the liver and gut, and then mobilizing stored toxins. The kidney, the gastro intestinal system, the lungs, and the skin need to be assessed and treated because those are our elimination organs.

Supporting liver metabolism is first. Remember all those toxins get bound up and packaged in your liver so they can be removed from the body. Then focus on supporting elimination from the liver and the flow through the gallbladder. The next focus is gut health and movement, because when you

clean out the liver, get your toxins mobilized, then release them to the gut, your lining and immune system needs to be functioning. With leaky gut the cells pull their tight junctions and allow the toxins, hormones, and chemicals to leak right back into your bloodstream.

We want to avoid being trapped in a vicious cycle of being unable to fully clear your body and heal your hormones cycle. You do a liver cleanse but your gut releases everything back into your blood stream, then your liver becomes backed up again, and you are back at step one. This is why so many people feel worse when they do a detox or a cleanse or even just a clean eating program because it just becomes this really nasty cycle of clean out the toxins, back in the blood stream, clean them out, back in the blood stream.

This drastically impacts weight loss and we get really frustrated because you did all this work and you still cannot lose weight. It is not your fault. We just have to get to the source because if you cannot lose weight. Do we need to check your thyroid? Or is your pituitary and hypothalamus not signaling? Is it adrenal fatigue? Is it your hormones? Is it toxins blocking your cell receptors and disrupting your hormone pathways?

Additional support for clearing your body and supporting pathways:

- Infrared Sauna
- Massage
- Nutritional support (see your 90 day plan)
- Epsom salt baths with baking soda
- Drinking purified water
- Air purifiers for your home or office, or using plants
- Walking and daily movement

When patients reduce their level of toxic burden, all their organs started to work much better. If you are unsure that your root cause is toxin overburden you can do testing. My goal is that you do not fall into the trap of chasing organ systems and supplements. Often people fall into the trap of adrenal fatigue and are given 15 different supplements, which don't work. Then they chase thyroid health and try another 15 bottles of supplements. Then chase energy supplements and B vitamins, and so on. Then you are trapped in another vicious cycle where you are taking an overwhelming number of supplements, nothing is working, you feel the same or worse, and all this time you missed a major component.

## Weight loss and the thyroid

You have probably been told at one point in your life that you just need to eat less, count your calories, and exercise. Follow the age-old theory of calories in versus calories out and everything will be fine. At this point you know that doesn't exactly work as you look at the workout DVD's and meal plans gathering dust in your basement.

Before our environment became overloaded with chemicals and endocrine receptors, we had an easier time not reaching obesity a because we weren't so inundated with chemicals and synthetic nutrition and processed food. When you eat whole food and healthy food and that was your whole life, it was easier to manage your weight and then just move more. Whereas now, we have these things that hold us back like chemicals and toxins. Obesogens, a term created in 2016, describes a class of chemicals that are known to affect lipid metabolism, brain function, energy balance, and fat stores leading to obesity.

Obesogens disrupt the feedback system that fine tunes the regulation of appetite in the brain. Our brain becomes resistant to hormones that signal satiety, fullness, and

balanced blood sugar. This is why portion control may not work when you are always hungry, you are not digesting and absorbing nutrition, and your brain is not getting the message to turn off appetite. Now we have another vicious cycle and honestly, we really can stop being so hard on ourselves.

There is a difference between *I just eat what I want and I'm unhappy about it* versus *I'm eating clean, I know what foods I'm sensitive to and I avoid those and something's still wrong*. We have to really focus on what's truly going on inside the body, what is affecting the brain, and how to manage those systems. The effect of obesogens and this type of brain dysregulation is also known as thyroid diabetes because the entire sugar regulation changes.

With thyroid diabetes we cannot absorb sugar into our cells for energy. The liver is not able to break sugar down for energy either and our body stores sugar and we develop insulin resistance. Here we have the chicken or the egg cycle. What's coming first? Is it the toxic exposure that's affecting the endocrine system which is affecting blood sugar metabolism? Or is it that we have a crappy diet which eventually turns off the brain which allows toxins to come in more?

Doctor Mercola shared an article that even organic wine has been found to have Round-Up in it<sup>7</sup>. So, what does this mean? That means that when farmers are using pesticides in conventional farms, the chemicals are leaking into the water. The organic farms that are close by are using water that is still being filled with toxins, and those toxins and those chemicals get into our food. They get into our body and they disrupt our hormones. They are called endocrine disrupters for a reason. Toxins are unavoidable, even when we eat organic, so give your body the best chance and detox on a regular basis.

Another term that we have for those types of chemicals that disrupt are xenohormones. The products that we are buying off the shelves have all these chemicals in it and they are labeled with the name "Fragrance." Similar to the term 'natural flavors' in food, companies are not required to detail every ingredient they use. They are able to use the term fragrance or natural flavors that has ingredients listed by the FDA in those categories.

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<https://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2016/04/12/monsanto-organic-wine.aspx>

This is why we like to recommend detoxing, purification programs, or just re-feeding nutritional programs. There is no way to know what you are eating all of the time, what's in your water, or what you're breathing in. Giving your body that chance to detox and reset is going to be huge to reset your body.

When starting a program, I would avoid a 2 day detox, that is not enough time for your body to accomplish anything.

Second, never pick a detox that causes your bowels to implode and keep you home for 2 weeks.

Third, your food choices will always impact how your body will handle a detox. Eat clean!

Fourth, detoxing is about clearing a path for the body to work. You cannot put good nutrition on a conveyor belt that isn't going anywhere! Clear the pathways (liver, kidney, gut), rebuild the pathway, and then support the pathway.

Daily detoxing is something as simple as putting lemon in your water, going for a walk, and being outside and getting fresh air.



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# Hidden Causes of Anxiety and Insomnia

The causes of anxiety disorders range from genetics, trauma, situational, hormonal, and difficulties with processing neurotransmitters due to leaky gut and leaky brain. This is not a replacement for therapy and support, but addressing the underlying physiological issues that increase anxiety and insomnia. This chapter will give you the most common and simple causes and solutions to anxiety.

This chapter is for you if you:

- Wake up and you're not hungry. You can wait until 1:00 in the afternoon and not even think about food.
- You wake up hungry, but you grab a cup of coffee and maybe a muffin from Starbucks and power through the rest of the day.
- You have major brain fog, memory concerns, and feeling exhausted all of the time.

- You get hangry, and irritable and shaky if you don't eat, or you fall asleep after eating.
- You feel hungover in the morning, but you don't drink
- You feel like you can sleep all day or you have to exercise to get that quick hit of energy to make it through the day.

Anxiety, insomnia, and depression have always ruled my life for as long as I can remember. I hid behind friends in class so I wouldn't get called on, was told I need to talk more, I avoided parties and going out, new places made me so nervous I was always one hour early in case I was late. I struggled with depression beginning in high school and I still have down times even today. When my son was born, I had severe post-partum depression and anxiety. I couldn't leave the house to go grocery shopping. Thankfully, I was introduced to essential oils and a friend recommended the grounding blend. My initial reaction was to think that there is no way that smelling an oil is going to fix anything. I needed medication! I tried it anyways and while in the middle of packing up my son to leave the house I was frozen. My heart racing, I couldn't breathe, and I grabbed the oil. Simply smelling directly from the bottle and putting a few drops on my wrist immediately

calmed me down. I felt like a completely different person!

Fast forward to last year when my blood work results showed severe reactive hypoglycemia and other concerning issues. I changed how I ate immediately and in two weeks I was sleeping soundly for the first time in my life, I found the foods that were creating anxiety in my body (I had to give up coffee and that was super difficult). Living my afternoon without acid reflux, gut pain, and agoraphobia was a game changer for me. I know this information will help you find your sleep and sanity as well.

This is not going to be a sexy conversation about the newest drug, supplement, product that you can rub all over you and you're going to sleep better. My question for you is what happens when you stop using that supplement or that pill? I love supplements. I love my oils. They can be supportive, change these patterns, and address root causes! But if you're becoming dependent on something, a cream or even essential oils, what happens when you stop taking that? If you didn't address your physiology and that underlying cause, then it's not truly doing anything for you.

Now we will cover the basic physiology of how your body and brain actually function because this is going to give us the foundation of why

it's not working and what you can look for to find your root cause.

When you go to sleep your brain continues to work. You continue to breathe, digest food, make hormones, and keep your body alive. For these processes to happen your brain needs energy. The first step is to signal hunger, but since you are sleeping your brain has protections built in so you can stay asleep and not you wake up to snack. The hypothalamus will then signal to the adrenals to release cortisol, which signals the liver to release its stored glucose, which is sugar, to feed the brain.

The release of glucose from the liver only feeds your brain for about two hours, and after that time, your brain will signal to the adrenals again to release more cortisol to increase glucose release from the liver. Throughout the whole night your adrenals will continue to release cortisol, which is why cortisol levels are higher in the morning. This also helps you wake up with energy and hunger.

If you are the person who wakes up every two hours, and you are tossing and turning, or you can fall asleep, but cannot stay asleep, this cortisol pattern is dysfunctional. The severity ranges from just waking up and going back to sleep, to needing to get up to read until the

energy burns off, or waking up with panic attacks, anxiety, or even asthma attacks.

When you are experiencing adrenal fatigue, your adrenals are worn down and cannot produce the cortisol that the brain needs to access sugar. Instead of signaling with cortisol the adrenals will send out epinephrine, also known as adrenaline. Epinephrine will increase your heart rate, breathing rate, and wake your brain up! We release this hormone during exercise or stressful experiences, except this is how your body is responding when you are sleeping and why you are being woken up all night long. This is why you are experiencing anxiety attacks, hot flashes, or just feeling restless.

Now, I know you are thinking that you will just jump ahead and fix your adrenals but that is actually not the answer to this problem. We still need to address the brain, thyroid, ovaries, and most importantly, blood sugar balance.

The most important foundation is blood sugar balance. When you are not hungry, skipping meals, and finding yourself in a bad cycle with food your brain becomes worn down from guessing if it will be fed. Maybe you are not getting fuel because you are ignoring those signals for hunger. You are just too busy and

stressed. You need to get the kids off to school. You need to get to work. Or you are overeating sugars, eating just fruit and coffee for breakfast and missing out on protein and fats.

When you suppress the hunger signal for long enough, your brain loses faith in you, and goes back to the adrenals to signal for hormones to find fuel. We call this plasticity, where our brain learns behaviors based on our lifestyle. Our entire body learns how we treat it with food, emotions, stress, or love. The brain as a relationship with the body. If you are telling your brain, "I'm never going to feed you again," it's going to panic. It's going to freak out. It has to relearn how to function again. The process of teaching your brain to trust you with food and providing real fuel, consistently, takes longer than a week. Be consistent with the tools that I will share with you.

If you are struggling with these issues the most important focus for you is to maintain your blood sugar levels by eating, eating consistently, and eating balanced protein, fats, and carbs. This means that you have to eat breakfast whether or not you are hungry. Your breakfast must include protein and fat to give your brain the fuel it needs to survive. Eating within thirty minutes of waking up will also

help jumpstart your metabolism and your memory.

Eat with your children at breakfast, sit down with them, and be present. Your children are not an excuse to not eat food. Cook your food alongside of theirs or have food prepped that you can all enjoy. Most women are too busy taking care of everyone else that they ignore their own body. I would be happier if you ate before everyone else because that means you are eating!

Eating breakfast on time will help retrain your brain to send you hunger signals again. Remember that it will take time for your brain to trust you. Hunger signals are important to follow because this is how your body keeps itself stable and provides itself with the tools it needs to heal, make hormones, and keep you alive.

The next thing is you have to eat enough calories. We are told, "Eat less, weigh less" but we know that's not true. This programming is so deeply ingrained from our childhood, going through high school and health classes were like, "Don't eat so much. You don't need that much food to live." That's true for people who are binging on fast food and processed food and eat for emotional and stress related reasons. This is not true for people who are in

this pattern who are either not eating the balanced plate or not eating enough. Track your calories and make sure they are at a good level for your health. Eating less than 1000 calories a day is what is destroying your brain and health.

Having enough calories in your diet allows your body to store sugar and fat in a healthy way. This gives your brain, adrenals, and liver a warehouse of energy to use between meals and at night. Low calorie diets will rob your brain of necessary fuel and keep you in this cycle of insomnia.

If you are waking up most of the night and struggling with anxiety during the day focusing on eating consistently and calorie dense will help protect your brain and reduce the hormone output that is causing the anxiety. Eating before symptoms start will help calm your body and retrain your brain.

Remember from my story where I was skipping breakfast and by 10am was struggling with anxiety and leaving the house? When I started eating breakfast again, I found that snacking before my 10am 'anxiety call' actually helped reduce and then eliminate those feelings.

Eat before the symptoms start. Eat healthy fats, healthy proteins, and fiber. These will feed your brain, and your brain will stop frantically looking for sugar from the adrenals and the adrenals will stop releasing adrenaline. This is not an excuse to grab a candy bar, eat a piece of fruit, or junk food. Find foods that fuel your body that include protein and healthy carbs. Avoid eating sugar alone at all costs, even fruit.

You must switch this hormonal chemical imbalance that is really initiating from your brain cascading down into your adrenals. When your blood sugar is imbalanced your body will become maladaptive to stress and this is known as reactive hypoglycemia. Skipping meals or eating improperly will take your blood sugar on a rollercoaster ride with your brain and adrenals following. Then you wonder why you are tired, fatigued, moody, and cannot sleep.

Food is fuel not your enemy!

Over time, ignoring your hunger signals and living with reactive hypoglycemia, your body will become insulin resistant, which turns into hyper-insulinemia, which is when your blood sugar's too high, which turns into metabolic syndrome, diabetes type one, type two, type

one and a half, type three, which is Alzheimer's.

Anxiety and insomnia can start here, when we are not eating, not eating consistently, and not eating enough. Your brain begins to panic, your adrenals become overwhelmed, and it seems like nothing is helping you sleep or relax.

Reactive hypoglycemia does not pair well with intermittent fasting or extreme low carb meal plans. Most people also do not do well with HIIT type exercise programs and would be best to focus on weight lifting, body-weight based programs, and walking.

Once you are out of the reactive hypoglycemia state you can start experimenting with different types of exercises and programs, different meal plans and carb ratios, but first you must heal your relationship with food.

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# Optimizing Hormone Patterns

It has taken us the whole book to finally talk cycles, female hormones, periods, and how this all works. Thank you for hanging in there with me. Thank you for reading through everything else first. If you skipped to this chapter, I get it. I would skip to here first, or the 'what to do' section. JUST FIX IT!

The previous chapters laid out everything that you need to do and why. Please do not skip those chapters! We discussed how our hormones are impacted by our blood sugar, essential fats and omegas, gut health, liver clearing, and addressing stress through the adrenals and thyroid.

Nothing else matters until you address and align these issues. You can take every hormone supplement, use every oil, dance a hormone dance, but you will be forced to keep playing those games for the rest of your life until you address the fundamentals. Go back, read those sections, and then the rest will make sense and

you won't feel like you have to leave a scathing review 'she barely talked about estrogen!'

To review quickly how hormones cycle through the month the first day of the menstrual cycle is day 1. Estrogen begins to rise and as the pituitary releases follicle stimulating hormone (FSH). These hormones build up for the release of an egg from the ovary. The pituitary then releases luteinizing hormone (LH) in a burst to stimulate ovulation halfway through the cycle. Estrogen begins to fall as progesterone raises. At the end of the cycle both estrogen and progesterone are at their lowest, FSH and LH have been cleared, and this allows the uterus to shed its lining and start menstruation.

The way I would like to approach understanding and optimizing your hormone balance is by highlighting the processes that can disrupt your hormones specifically.

Remember the foundational approaches of first balancing blood sugar, liver clearance, gut health, and the adrenals and thyroid. Then we can begin to evaluate and explore deeper factors.

## The hypothalamus and pituitary

The hypothalamus is the master control board for the whole body. It evaluates the blood and hormones and signals to the pituitary on what hormones need to be increased or decreased. The pituitary sends hormones directly to organs and instruct them on how to regulate their output of hormones and processes. The interaction of these two organs with the body is commonly referred to as the HP-Axis.

The most common disruption with the HP-Axis is known as secondary pituitary insufficiency. This means the target organ, the thyroid or ovaries, are functioning but the pituitary is not sending correct signals because of a disrupted feedback loop. This looks like secondary hypothyroidism, where the TSH levels are lowered, appearing to be hyperthyroidism, but T4 is lowered to signal to the pituitary to increase thyroid production. The pituitary is not responding and is unable to communicate with the endocrine organs.

The pituitary shuts off or becomes dysregulated with inflammation, long term blood sugar dysfunction, high fevers with infections, trauma, and a leaky blood-brain barrier. With sub-clinical or functional

secondary failure, we see an exacerbation of symptoms that aren't resolved with normal treatment. With what we can refer to as clinical secondary failure we are referring to conditions that require pharmaceutical intervention. For this chapter we will be focused on how to support the hypothalamus and pituitary naturally.

1. Reduce inflammation in the body and the brain by taking out processed foods, testing for food sensitivity, and drinking purified water. Eating healthy fats and increasing your intake of Omega 3's will support brain function and give your body the building blocks it needs to create healthy hormones.
2. Improve your blood sugar to reduce stress on the adrenals and cortisol output. This can decrease the cycle of hypothalamus and hippocampus destruction due to high levels of cortisol. Healthy blood sugar will also improve your sleep and reduce stress.
3. Glandular support through supplements will provide the DNA and cellular framework for your organs to rebuild properly and with the correct nutrition.
4. Essential oils that have higher levels of sesquiterpenes, like frankincense, can help support brain function, oxygenate

the brain, and support emotional health and stress.

5. Activating your brain in the morning will help jumpstart your adrenals in a healthy way. Upon waking, do a simple 30 second HIIT type exercise. Doing 10 reps of squats, pushups, and lunges will help wake up your brain and adrenals, improve cortisol levels, and support brain function.

## Estrogen

Testing, and not guessing, is the only way to know your current and active levels of hormones. I love quizzes and symptom checkers as much as the next person but please do not guess and take a supplement that may worsen your condition. You may be experiencing symptoms of estrogen dominance, but actually have low levels of the free hormone.

Remember that increases in estrogen will cause the liver to increase thyroid binding globulin which pulls out all the active thyroid hormones that are circulating in our body causing functional hypothyroidism. You might have symptoms of low thyroid but it's actually coming from high estrogen and you have to get that estrogen out of your body and cycling correctly. An imbalance in your gut bacteria

may lower or raise your estrogen levels and it is important to do stool testing and always add in a gut healing protocol to your program.

Saliva testing will also help you interpret if you need to focus on balancing hormones or supporting the brain to balance FSH or LH. These tests will also help you know if you are producing enough hormones but the cells in the ovaries are not receptive and need support.

Imbalanced estrogen is typically associated with a body that is apple shaped, heavy periods with PMS, headaches, bloating, and skin conditions.

Changes in estrogen can cause an increase in bleeding. Healthy blood loss during menstruation is about 10-35ml total per period. That means one regular tampon per day of your period or 1 cup total if you are using a menstrual cup. 1-4 cups per day of your period is not normal and is not healthy but can be managed with support.

Estrogen clearance starts with first eliminating environmental estrogens from plastics, body care products, makeup, and warming up your food in plastic. Then we can focus on clearing the liver with nutritional support and focus on food.

Instead of focusing on supplements and treatments to raise or lower your estrogen, it is more important to focus on how to balance your hormones and clear your pathways.

1. Support your liver first to bind excess hormones to be released and eliminated through the gut. Methylcobalamin (B12) can help provide methyl groups to assist with liver clearance. Glutathione, glutathione recyclers, digestive enzymes, and herbal support with milk thistle will also give general liver support to bind hormones.
2. Continue to support your gut health to prevent the recirculation of hormones due to leaky gut or overgrowth of bacteria.
3. Essential oils such as clary sage, women's blends, and frankincense can support hormone pathways and balance.
4. Regular exercise, even walking for 20 minutes a day, will improve lymphatic and blood circulation, bone strength, and adrenal rebound.
5. Avoid intermittent fasting, unless directed by your physician. If you struggle with reactive hypoglycemia, fasting will disrupt your HP Axis and hormone synthesis. For those who have insulin resistance or pre-diabetes, intermittent fasting may be

supportive under the supervision of your doctor.

## Testosterone and PCOS

Testosterone is responsible for maintaining energy, libido, and our sense of wellbeing. It is protective against cancer and helps reduce body fat levels. Increases of testosterone in women comes with symptoms such as hair loss, facial hair, cystic acne, infertility, PCOS, and drastic changes in menstrual cycles. Most women who are diagnosed with high testosterone also have ovarian cysts. This is known as polycystic ovarian syndrome. While the exact physiology and mechanism that triggers PCOS is considered unknown, insulin resistance is one of the main symptoms as well as causes.

To best manage testosterone and PCOS, testing is again the most important step. A hormone saliva test and basic blood panel can help you understand how and why your body is working. You can test for LH, FSH, prolactin, and blood sugar markers to give a big picture of how to move forward. When looking at the hormone pathway chart, you see that DHEA is a precursor to testosterone and then estrogen. Testosterone imbalance commonly occurs

because of imbalances of DHEA due to stress and pregnenolone steal.

Some basic steps to balance testosterone and reduce PCOS symptoms include:

1. Balancing blood sugar through food choices, improving cell response to insulin, and stabilizing blood sugar throughout the day. This may mean intermittent fasting would be an option for you, or eating three controlled meals throughout the day.
2. Increasing fiber will assist in balancing hormone levels and removal from the intestines.
3. Herbs such as gymnema or vitex can help balance the adrenals, blood sugar, and overall hormone production
4. Specific glandular support for the ovaries and adrenals will also help in balancing hormone production and reduce cysts.

This is an incredibly simplistic protocol to begin with and anyone who is struggling with PCOS knows that it is a complicated and painful syndrome. Continue to work closely with your physician, stabilize your blood sugar and your cells sensitivity to insulin, and managing your sleep and stress will keep your body healthy as you are recovering.

## Progesterone

Progesterone partners with estrogen to create our cycle but it must be in the right proportions and ratios as they shift through the cycle and into menopause. Many times women think they have estrogen dominance when they actually have a progesterone deficiency because the symptoms are very similar.

Progesterone deficiency symptoms can include PMS, heavy bleeding, clotting, insomnia, weight gain, acne, headaches, low libido, and fibroids. This is why testing is so incredibly important to balance hormones.

Progesterone excess is less common and symptoms include fatigue, bloating, estrogen imbalance, ligament pain and back pain, higher levels of cortisol, and memory concerns.

Transdermal creams are often prescribed to women for hormone replacement therapy. However, creams cause the hormones to build up in fat and tissues. After a few months the tissues are saturated and women begin to feel worse. When they stop using the creams the body will release hormones randomly through the fat, especially with a weight loss program, causing a rollercoaster of hormones

circulating in the blood, increasing symptoms and making you feel miserable.

Supporting progesterone is similar to the hormone protocols listed above. Managing blood sugar, stress, and diet are the most important factors. Glandular support for the ovaries and adrenals will also help balance progesterone. When hormone replacement therapy is necessary, sublingual dosing will be the most supportive and least likely to be deactivated by the liver.

## Birth Control

I have a love hate relationship with birth control. We can be grateful for the ability to use this medication to support cycles, stop extreme and excessive blood loss, and prevent pregnancy. However, we must still be aware of the side effects and risks of these medications. Birth control has major negative impacts on our body including increasing risks for cancer, gallbladder issues, estrogen dominance, increase in blood pressure, increased risk of stroke and heart attacks, and nutritional deficiencies. These medications also suppress the hypothalamus and pituitary, and can lead to long term dysfunction of the endocrine system. Did you know that birth control is associated with cervical dysplasia because it

lowers folic acid levels as well as other B complex vitamins, which thins the layers of the cervix? HPV infection or not, cervical cancer and dysplasia is a serious condition and over 13,000 women in 2019 will be diagnosed. <sup>8</sup>

If you are currently taking birth control you can protect your healthy by taking additional B complex vitamins, zinc and magnesium. You can follow the program outlined in the next chapter and increase your essential fatty acids, multi-vitamins, and immune support.

Most pharmaceutical birth control pamphlets will state that the drug does not affect future fertility and women will be able to conceive within the next few months after stopping their birth control. Some women have found that their hormones have a more difficult time normalizing after stopping their medication, and therefore difficulty achieving pregnancy.

Start with a purification program to help the liver and fat cleanse out stored hormones from the medication. Next increase your daily intake of fiber through food or supplements. Fiber will attach to excess hormones and toxins to move them out of your body, which is

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/cervical-cancer/about/key-statistics.html>

why fiber is important in a purification program. Increasing greens will also help bind excess hormones in the bloodstream.

Continue to chart your fertility signs to monitor if you have started to ovulate and that your progesterone levels are high enough after ovulation to support a pregnancy. Your temperature after ovulation must remain high for at least 10 days after ovulation, which shows that your progesterone levels are relatively at a healthy level to support a pregnancy. If your temperature is dropping or low (close to your pre-ovulatory temperature) after ovulation you may need progesterone supplementation or a B vitamin to support progesterone production.



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# Peri-Menopause and Menopause

The shift of a woman's body into perimenopause and menopause can be drastic. Most women suffer for years with no explanation of why hormone replacement therapy isn't working, their body feels like it is failing, and they have lost connection with their body and their spouse.

What you need to understand about this change to be empowered and reclaim your body is this: entering menopause is essentially hitting a pause button on your body. If you are inflamed, struggle with leaky gut and leaky brain, joint pain, or hormone imbalance, this is how your body will stay and you will be left managing the symptoms. The healthier you can enter menopause the better chance you will have of experiencing minimal symptoms. The research shows us that the shift in hormones increases neuroinflammation, compromises barrier systems especially the brain, increases hypothalamus and pituitary activity, and activates the immune system to increase autoimmune activity.

During menopause the ovaries begin to produce lower levels of estrogen and

progesterone. The adrenals begin to take over to compensate for the decrease. The pituitary will begin to increase FSH and LH in an attempt to trigger ovulation, but there is not enough estrogen to cause an egg to release. FSH and LH will remain elevated throughout menopause. The type of estrogen produced by the ovaries is estrone (E1), as opposed to estradiol (E2) which was predominant during cycling years. Progesterone is still generated by the adrenals and is necessary for total hormone balance. Ideally this is a gradual and natural transition for women in their late forties to fifties, but most women find themselves abruptly struggling with major symptoms.

One of the biggest struggles that women complain about is when they are eating perfectly, exercising to their body's needs, reducing stress and yet they still are manifesting severe hormone symptoms. This happens because inflammation levels that are present at the time the body enters menopause become independent of diet and environmental factors and begin to rise on their own. This means that we are left to manage the symptoms as much as possible and lifestyle, while supportive, is not the cure.

Symptoms commonly associated with menopause are hot flashes, vaginal dryness, loss of hair, memory decline, and insomnia.

These are mostly due to the decrease in estrogen as the ovaries slow down and the current traditional management is to prescribe hormone replacement therapy.

Hormone replacement therapy blatantly ignores the physiology and ignores the question of 'why' is this happening and how can we best support the body? As estrogen decreases, inflammation becomes unregulated in the body and is one of the root causes of menopausal symptoms that do not subside despite treatment. I do not want to completely demonize hormone replacement therapy. Many times it is completely necessary and supportive for a woman's health.

Another reason for experiencing a difficult hormonal shift is adrenal fatigue. The adrenals will take over hormone production and when the adrenals are already compromised due to a lifetime of stress, unregulated blood sugar, and current inflammation, the adrenals cannot keep up with the extra demand of producing more hormones.

In my practice, I work with women of all ages who are entering peri-menopause earlier and earlier in life. Women as young as 25 to 30 years old are missing periods, experiencing hot flashes, and are unable to conceive. Even women who are in their late 40's or early 50's may be entering menopause too early. Having

severe symptoms is a sign that your body is not ready and you can adjust your lifestyle and health to bring your body back into rhythm, regain your cycles, and then enter menopause easily. The program outlined in the next chapter is a simple and effective way to reset your cycle and bring your body into balance.

The physiology of menopause is also incredibly complex and though it is tempting to bring you the physiology of cortisol patterns, brain inflammation and destruction, stress responses, how estrogen dropping affects and triggers leaky gut and osteoporosis, you are here for information on how to fix it!

The same process applies to all women who are struggling with hormone imbalances.

1. Clearing pathways in the liver and intestines
2. Improving nutrition and increasing essential fatty acids
3. Reducing inflammation
4. Testing to determine what is happening
5. Specific care and support for your body

Saliva testing is still an excellent option to determine how your hormones are functioning. I would recommend a three day saliva test, instead of a one day, in order to

assess how your hormones are fluctuating over time, especially if you are not fully in menopause.

Follow the 90-day plan outlined in the next chapter and increase your focus on supporting your adrenals. Because your body has been in an inflamed state for longer you will need more time to recover. Set your expectations of perfect health and healing down and focus on getting to know your body on a deeper level. This is your time to focus on you, how you are feeling, how you want to live your life moving forward, and enjoying the relationship you have with your body.



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# Your Plan with Nutrition And Essential Oils

## What Are Whole Food Supplements

The most complicated and emotional block everyone needs help with is their diet and choosing the right foods for their body. The problem is for all of us is that we know what to do, we know how to eat, we just struggle with our addictions, programming, and for some, it is a lack of knowledge or disbelief.

You know to shop around the outside of the grocery store, avoid sugar and processed foods. But we find ourselves confused and still sick, even when we think we are making healthy choices. Sugar now has over 64 names because of the food industry sneaking it into our foods so they change the labels.

In 2003 a research study showed "Vegetables on average have a 33% decrease in mineral content. Fruit has had a 17% reduction in minerals on average, and meat has had a 29% reduction in mineral content" (David Thomas, Nutrition and Health, 2003).

What does this mean for you and your foods?

Every year that goes by we need to consume more and more food, fresh fruits and vegetables, just to get the daily required nutrients than we did the year before.

This is why I am so passionate about finding the whole food supplements as a daily practice to support my health. There is no way I could or would even want to eat the volume of food needed to cover what my body needs on a daily basis.

What is the deal with whole food nutrition supplements?

- Most nutritional supplements are chemically based, meaning that the vitamins are created in a lab with synthetic chemicals but because they have similar structures to vitamins found in food, the FDA allows them to be labeled as such. But our bodies do not recognize these chemicals and they actually cause more harm than good.
- Think about cereal: what cereal is actually wheat grains that are bleached and all of the natural nutrition found is processed out. Then they spray the cereal with a chemical

spray that has 'vitamins' inside and call it enriched.

- Our food is so complex that carrots have thousands and thousands of nutrients in them, but we go in and take out 3 or 4 from the carrot, replicate it, and call it a great supplement!

It is well known that we are able to absorb more nutrition from food and whole food supplements than isolated and individual nutrients in high doses. Our body prefers food to chemicals! When you look at the back of your supplement bottle it should have foods listed in the ingredient section, not chemicals.

Dr. Pottenger was a pioneer in nutrition studies in the early 1900's. He studied the diets of cats and the differences in their health when fed whole fresh food versus cooked and processed foods. He proved that cats eating fresh meat, raw milk, and cod liver oil remained healthy, whereas a group of cats eating heated milk and cooked meat began to develop health problems and degenerative diseases within the first generation.<sup>9</sup>

Cats in the second and third generations developed degenerative diseases earlier: they

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<sup>9</sup> <https://price-pottenger.org/>

became blind, weak, infertile, with hypothyroidism and soft bones, culminating in a short lifespan. Allergies increased up to 90 percent in the cats fed processed foods versus only 5 percent in the cats fed raw foods. Kittens of the third generation of cats fed cooked foods suffered adverse personality changes, with males exhibiting docility and females aggressiveness. By the fourth generation, the cats were sterile and could not reproduce.

Dr. Pottenger also conducted a milk study with the cats, using pasteurized, evaporated, sweetened, condensed, and raw milk. Cats on raw milk thrived while cats on the other regimens sickened. The changes that Dr. Pottenger saw in the cats were similar to those observed by Dr. Price in his world travels when groups abandoned their native diets and adopted diets of processed foods. Some experts claim that today we are seeing the results of Pottenger's fourth generation of cats in our younger generations of humans.

In the 1930s, Szent-Györgyi discovered vitamin C, "the anti-scorbutic factor,"<sup>10</sup> as well as components and reactions of the citric acid cycle. In some experiments, he used paprika, a famous national food product, as a source of the vitamin and as the Hungarian cure for

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<sup>10</sup> <https://profiles.nlm.nih.gov/WG/>

scurvy. The Hungarian scientist Albert Szent-Györgyi, MD (1893-1986), won the Nobel Prize in physiology in 1937 for his discovery of vitamin C.

What he later found was that when he gave a colleague who was suffering from a severe hemorrhagic disease, he gave him paprika and he was cured. But when he tried to produce the same effect with pure ascorbic acid there was no response. He realized that giving synthetic versions of vitamins was not as effective as the food-based compounds. We now know that vitamins are packaged as a complex nutrient group with tocopherols, vitamins, and supportive molecules. Our body needs the whole package together in order to digest, absorb, and utilize nutrition. The body does not know how to take isolated compounds without their packaging and use them to heal. Now we have research that shows synthetically derived vitamin C pills are linked to inflammation, arterial clogging, and it speeds up arteriosclerosis.<sup>11</sup> The same research paper found that food-based vitamin C can be protective for the arteries.

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<sup>11</sup>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3447163/> and  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5000725/>

Did you catch that? High doses of the chemical vitamin C are linked to inflammation and artery clogging. Research is showing that the health of the individual will determine how the body responds and utilizes vitamin C ranging from supportive for cholesterol and inflammation levels to exacerbating atherosclerosis in others. This also explains why high dose vitamin C can be supportive for cancer patients but not for those who are in relatively good health.

The key here is to focus on the difference between the synthetic 'supplement' versions versus eating a variety of fruits, vegetables, and getting the whole complex of vitamins and minerals in their natural forms.

**When you extract one component of food and give it at very high levels you just don't know what you are doing to the system and it may be adverse.**

#### Your 90 Day Foundational Plan:

The first basic step is to start with a simple cleanse. A cleanse will address every system and give you a great base to build upon. The reason we start with a simple cleanse is because good nutrition can clear out many symptoms and we can see what is left over after the program.

Remember from the beginning of this book we started with the digestive system, liver and gut clearance, and how the pathways of hormones can be disrupted. Starting with a cleanse or digestive support program will help open these pathways, reduce stress on the liver and gut, manage pathogens, and replace your gut with good bacteria.

I prefer cleanses that work from the top down with the digestive system. We start with supporting the stomach with enzymes and small doses of hydrochloric acid to help digest food so it becomes more absorbable. Then we focus on the liver and gallbladder so we can effectively clear toxins and hormones and allow the gallbladder to deliver them into the intestines. This will also help your pancreas and support your blood sugar balance. After this, we focus on the gut to clear out yeast, bacteria, food, and reset the bacterial balance.

A few years ago, I was talking with a colon hydrotherapist (someone who is professionally trained to give enemas), and I asked her what was the craziest thing she had ever seen. She said this man came in in his mid-thirties and a barbie shoe came out when he had his therapy done. He thinks he ate it when he was four and playing with his sister's barbie dolls. That means this shoe was sitting

in his gut for years and years and years. What kind of damage did that do? What kind of inflammation did that cause? Can you imagine?

It is important to note that as you go through this 90 day plan your cycles will change. Do not rely on natural family planning methods until your cycle normalizes as your ovulation day may change as your body resets. Meaning, use extra protection and caution if you are wanting to avoid pregnancy.

The first two periods you have during this program may also be intensified. You may experience heavier bleeding, more release of clots, increase in moodiness, and your period may even be longer. This is completely normal and expected, please stay the course. Your brain and body will need a few cycles to regulate as your pathways clear, hormones are finally leaving your body, and your adrenals begin recovering. After these initial cycles are done you should notice your period lightening, less clotting and cramping, your mood should improve, and you will find you can enjoy life again. If you do not feel better or you continue to worsen with each cycle, please seek professional support with a functional medicine physician to rule out any underlying concerns.

When you read this program you may think this looks too easy and simple, maybe it will be a waste of time. I totally understand, but starting simple will lay the foundation for your health for your whole life. At the time of writing this book, I have personally helped 12 women in the past three years, who were struggling with fertility and hormone complications become pregnant. That may not sound like a large number but having a child after being told you are infertile and have 10% chance of pregnancy is a miracle. I have helped hundreds of women balance their hormones in my practice. Lay the foundation and allow your body to come back to balance and health. If you are still experiencing symptoms after the program, reach out for help and a personalized program.

## First 30 days: Clearing the Pathways

### **Digestive Support:**

- ✦ Terrazyme® (Digestive Enzyme Complex) with meals
- ✦ LifeLong Vitality® with meals
- ✦ GX® assist (GI Cleansing formula) for days 11-20
- ✦ PB® Assist (probiotic defense formula) for days 21-30

- ⤴ Zendocrine Herbal Complex® daily with meals

### **Oil Support**

- ⤴ Lemon in water
- ⤴ Clary Calm® - roll hip to hip daily

### **Nutritional support:**

- Balancing blood sugar by eating every 2-3 hours
- No skipping meals
- Carry snacks everywhere
- Never eat fruit, carbs, or sugar alone or without protein and fat
- Increase green veggies

### **Stress Management**

- Breath counting before meals
- Turn off television and phone 30 minutes or more before bed

## **Next 30 days: Hormone Balancing**

### **Supplement support:**

- Lifelong Vitality Supplements®
- TerraGreens® - one scoop per day
- Terrazyme® with meals
- PB assist® at night before bed

### **Oil Support**

- ⤴ Clary Calm® - roll hip to hip daily

- ⤴ Basic hormone oil combination of yarrow, pink pepper, frankincense, copaiba, turmeric, black pepper – equal parts in one capsule daily
- ⤴ Lemon essential oil in water – 1-2 drops in glass or stainless steel container

### **Adrenal Support:**

- Aromatouch® essential oil on feet and back in morning

### **Nutritional support:**

- Begin tracking foods, mood, pain, digestive health, and symptoms
- Eliminate trigger foods such as processed foods, dairy, wheat, and eggs

### **Stress Management:**

- Serenity® and copaiba capsules at night or during day for anxiety and mood support

## Last 30 days: Symptom Management

### **Supplement support:**

- Lifelong Vitality®
- TerraGreens®
- Terrazyme® with meals
- PB assist® at night

**Oil Support:**

- Continue Clary Calm®
- Continue basic hormone combination
- Continue with lemon in water

**Nutritional support:**

- Continue with basic plan to balance blood sugar
- Experiment with new foods, food rotation, and elimination

**Control Toxicity:**

- Begin to replace toxic household cleaners, beauty and body care products
- Geranium oil over the liver to improve pathways

**Why I choose doTERRA, Lifelong Vitality supplements and Essential oils**

I am embarrassed to admit that my dedication to whole food supplements caused me to turn away from every company that I was introduced to while opening my chiropractic office. I had been using the same three whole food companies for almost ten years, I trusted them, I had consistent and fantastic results, and I did not want to even look at anything else.

Until one day, I finally looked at the ingredients in doTERRA's Vitality supplement kit and I was so thrilled to see their whole food ingredients! Since 2012, I have been recommending the Vitality supplements because the body will be able to digest and assimilate the nutrition just as it does with food. These supplements contain the omega and essential fat support that we have been discussing throughout this whole book as well as anti-oxidants to support healthy inflammation reactions. Personally, I noticed how drastic my pain levels in my joints decreased while taking these supplements, my hormones shifted drastically, and my sleep and mood improved.

This is why I continue to recommend them throughout the whole 90 day plan. You will continue to need all of this support throughout your life, and taking these supplements will help you transition your hormones and support you for years to come.

I still utilize other whole food companies for extremely specific support for personalized care plans, but I am confident in recommending the Vitality kit to everyone.

### Essential Oils: Monthly Blend For Women

The women's monthly blend, Clary Calm®, is mentioned throughout this book and the plan

and I would like to specifically talk about this blend and how important it is for supporting hormone health. ClaryCalm® is that it is an oil blend and can be used by rolling it hip to hip, or applying it to the ankles, wrists, or the back of the neck.

What I love the most about this oil is that it is adaptogenic. Adaptogenic is a term that describes plants and their compounds, that have a positive and balancing effecting on the neuroendocrine-immune systems. For hormones, this means that no matter where you are in your cycle, how old you are, if you're not cycling, if you're post-menopausal, the complex will bring your body back into balance by working with the body's natural state. Adaptogens are not able to force your body to increase or decrease hormones like medications, but will work with the state your body is in currently to encourage healthy responses to stress, endocrine signals, and support the immune system.

Starting when my daughter was probably six, she would be moody and extremely sensitive. I was using the women's blend for my own emotional support and decided to use this oil for her as well. She doesn't know why I chose this oil but knows that it helps her feel calm and centered. This oil is great for women who are peri- or pre-menopausal as well. Again, this is why we call it adaptogenic, because it

brings your body back to balance of where you are instead of forcing your hormones to go one way or the other. How many drugs or supplements for hormones do you know of that you can use for a wide range of ages with positive results?

I use this oil every day to support healthy cycles. I went from seven day periods down to three day periods. From periods where I was losing all of my blood supply and I looked like a vampire and I laid on the couch and thought I was going to die, down to a normal blood loss. I have so much more energy. My mood swings were better. And I felt better.

What is normal blood loss? Healthy loss is about 10-35ml total per period. That means one regular tampon per day of your period or 1 cup total if you are using a menstrual cup. 1-4 cups per day of your period is not normal and is not healthy but can be managed with support.

Use this oil every day and I recommend definitely keeping this oil somewhere where you're going to remember to use it every day. Keep it on either your nightstand, keep it next to your toothbrush, and when you hop out of the shower, roll it on.

It is important to note that the women's hormone oil is a blend and the Clary Sage is a

single plant. Research with the clary sage and the sage family has shown positive effects on cognitive and neurological processes. These oils may support healthy levels of serotonin, dopamine, and GABA, which can help with PMS symptoms, anxiety, depression.<sup>12</sup> The sage family is also known to support healthy cortisol levels, improve memory and concentration, and reduce inflammation.

Oils can be used topically and aromatically to support the neuroendocrine-immune systems, reduce inflammation to support the brain and hormone pathways, and provide significant emotional support. Just remember, oils only work if you use them and use them consistently. Keep applying the oils every day, apply them to different areas of your body (using safety precautions, not using them in your eyes or ears, and using the correct dilution).

## Essential Oils: Mood and Stress and Stories

“If momma ain’t happy, ain’t nobody happy”. I remember this cross-stitched plaque hanging in my childhood home. Everyone knows when to hide from mom when she isn’t feeling her

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<sup>12</sup>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5318325/>

best. As you go through your support program you will find that your hormones change, some days are worse than others, and your first few cycles might be more intense than typical. Managing your emotions and mood will help you get through these weeks and essential oil can help!

A family favorite oil is the Forgive® blend. Forgive® is an excellent blend for the belly and as a mood oil, to help the smooth muscle for diarrhea and constipation. If you are holding stress in your gut, you have a stress belly, you can manage this with food and emotional support. My son has this issue, whenever he has a really big transition or his sister came home on the wrong day, he is just a big mess. He has even made himself sick with anxiety over his first grade choir recital and was able to stay home because he was so ill. We used Forgive® on his belly, as well as Serenity and Balance oils. Copaiba is another oil we use with him on a daily basis to support his mood and brain.

The adrenals are stress handling glands. They sit on top of our kidneys and produce cortisol and a number of different sex hormones as well. We will talk about Pregnenolone Steal and how that messes up our hormones because we don't have enough building blocks, there's not enough cookie to go around, to

make good hormones if all of our stress and all of our hormones are going to make cortisol.

What I love for hormone and stress support is the Aroma Touch Technique, which was created by Doctor David Hill, who is our Chief Science Officer at doTERRA. It is very simple and he created this technique so it would be easy for anyone to do. There are free instructional videos on <https://www.doterra.com/US/en/aromatouch-technique> for you to learn this oil application.

When I took the training course the instructor asked who had received an Aromatouch application before. I raised my hand and said “kinda”. She was confused but when I explained what I meant she was happy and agreed with the method. You don't have to do this beautiful technique perfectly or with the right timing, because your spouse probably is not going to do that. When my husband does the Aroma Touch Technique for me, he puts four drops of the oils on my back, one oil at a time. Then he just furiously rubs it in. There is no lofty massage technique, spa music, and I'm sure he is drinking a beer at the same time too. Honestly, that is all I need to have the oils work for my body. The heat, contact, and putting it on your spine is the most important thing for this technique to support stress, inflammation, hormones, and everything else.

If you are struggling with stress, insomnia, tightness in your body, headaches, pain, try the Aroma Touch Technique. Don't worry about the right technique. We do this application for the whole family every week and my children actually do this for each other! The point is that you are not massaging or trying to do deep muscle work. Focus on using the oils and trying the protocol.

When I left chiropractic three and a half years ago, I was devastated. I was free. I was upset. I was overjoyed. I was so fatigued I started sleeping in until 10:00 in the morning. I would wake up and I would feel like death, my hormones were a hot mess, and it started getting really scary, because I was losing so much blood during my cycles.

This is when I started having my husband do that technique on me every day and I literally just sat on the floor with my shirt over my head while he just rubbed the oils on. That's when I learned, because the next morning I woke up, I woke up at 9:15 and I was like, "Oh, hey. Look at me getting up early. 9:15. I feel okay." So, we kept doing the oil application and I kept waking up a little bit earlier, a little bit earlier, a little bit earlier. I started feeling more balanced and getting the help that I needed.

When my daughter is upset or she's having a bad day, I literally just hand her my box of

blends and I say, "Smell them all until you find one that you like." Because you have to find the one that resonates with you. It's going to be different every time. I actually hated the smell of Forgive® when I first tried it. Until one day I was feeling very angry, I picked up Forgive® and it smelled amazing! I couldn't believe it and I immediately felt more centered.

I had the same experience with Vetiver. I had a really horrible day at the office a few years ago and I really hated the smell of Vetiver. It did not resonate with my body at all. On this day, I was so distraught with life, I told my front desk I was going to move to Mexico, burn the house down, and run away.

I always had a stash of oils at my office, and I choose my oils based on smelling different ones and finding the one that I feel a difference with in that moment. On this day I picked up Vetiver and it smelled like Heaven. I don't know why, I just couldn't get enough of Vetiver. I applied it on the back of my neck, on my wrists, and on my belly. In 10 minutes, I was back to myself, feeling happy and stable. Later that day I thought I would try the Vetiver again since I found it so helpful, and it smelled horrible! I knew that my body had reorganized its chemistry back to normal and that's why the Vetiver smelled differently.

The moral of this story is to keep trying different oils, use your intuition and don't be afraid to experiment. I know it is frustrating when you ask for recommendations or you look up references and 10 oils are listed. Every body has a different chemistry and will respond in different ways. Find the support that works best for you!



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# Love, Libido, Connection, Trust, & Self Confidence

When we do our initial consultation, I ask about your libido.

*You say It's great! My husband works 12 hours shifts opposite of me so we never see each other.*

I stare at you from across the screen trying to decipher your meaning between your words. *So you have no libido and you are happy because you don't have to worry about it? Or your libido is good and you are happy without sex, or your libido is good and you don't want to talk about this part of your life?*

Typically, expectations are low when your spouse works night shift and you work day shift, or vice versa. Everyone numbs out, there is no intimacy or even a dinner together. No one is complaining and no one seems to notice the months slip by.

When physiology is the root cause of low libido that can be easy to remedy. A friend called me three weeks into her program to say

that her husband is sitting on the couch just smiling at her. “I have my wife back!” When we first talked she was struggling with depression, fatigue, insomnia, pain, and sadness over not being able to be active with her husband. She was missing out on her favorite activities with her friends, she wasn’t able to go for walks with her husband, and when they were both home from work late at night she was so exhausted and wired she wasn’t interested in sex. “I love him so much, he is my world. I feel so bad that I am just not interested in sex. I cannot even stomach the idea”. Luckily for this friend, we were able to adjust her hypothalamus and pituitary, change up her foods and increase how much she was eating, bring back healthy fats and carbs, and worked on stress management strategies.

Many times, I need to recommend hormonal support to rejuvenate vaginal tissues with women who are menopausal or even for those who are experiencing ovarian failure. The plan outlined in the previous chapter is your best starting point and again, if you find that you are not noticing major changes in the first three months, seek help from a functional medicine physician to help you dig deeper, do more testing, and get to the root cause.

This chapter will focus on the psychological aspect of libido. The real reasons that women lose their passion, excitement, wetness, and desire.

I am not a counselor, therapist, or psychiatrist. I do not feel qualified to discuss or treat trauma outside of lifestyle and nutritional support. Trauma, rape, abuse, abortions, and emotional conflicts are best supported through therapy. Therapy is the best opportunity to safely address your history, emotions, and pain. I have utilized therapy since I was in high school and worked with many different types of therapists including psychiatrists, family therapists, religious counselors, and life coaches. If you have found therapy to not be as supportive as you needed, please find a different counselor. Try a different method, approach, or person. Keep looking and ask for referrals from friends or social media. I have talked to people who told me everything happened to me was my fault, shamed for not being of the right religion, and ran in circles talking about my past and relationships. I have also been supported by the most amazing women who held me up, gave me permission to be sad, share about my struggles, understand me, and then when I was ready, gave me the tools to move forward. Find someone who helps you move forward

and at the same time holds space for you to navigate your feelings.

Common complaints I hear from my patients and friends are:

I don't want sex to last longer than 10 minutes.

After that it hurts and I am bored.

I haven't had an orgasm during sex. I'm not sure it matters.

Sex is so painful!

What foreplay?

I always turn the lights off, I cannot stand being naked or seen.

I've never thought about what I want or need, what else is there?

He isn't interested in me at all. He would rather watch TV or just go to bed.

Where is the disconnect in our relationship with sex?

- Desires and finding what we want
- Communication and asking for what we want
- Confidence in our body and our self
- Tuning into your body, cycle, and emotions
- Emotional blocks with worthiness, shame, and guilt

Are you stuck with the same old routine on the same schedule and burning the same candle

for the past 10 years? Boring. Uninspiring. Unsatisfying. *“Use lube and get it over with.”*

This makes me feel so sad for women who are sharing this with me. Their love for their partners is true and they are incredibly loyal, but the spark is gone. The passion is gone from their marriage, their work, their friendships, and it can be extremely isolating.

If you do not know what you want you cannot ask for it. If you do not know your body, your cycle, your needs, your desires, you cannot ask and then receive. Being separated from yourself has cut you off from your partner.

Your first task is to discover what you desire on a physical and soul level. Read steamy books, watch movies, check out blogs and videos from sex coaches and therapists. Fill out the intimacy checklist by yourself or with your partner and chat about what interests you

([www.LittleBlackBagMedicine.com/Hormone Guide](http://www.LittleBlackBagMedicine.com/HormoneGuide)). You will probably be surprised at your answers. Fill out the chart alone and take some time to research each technique or activity. Journal about what you would like to try or write out a story to share with your partner.

Only when you know what you want and desire can you express this to your partner.

Many women struggle with self-lubrication and need additional lube to reduce pain and friction during sex. While I do not disagree with using additional lubrication, I do believe that if it is needed there is an underlying reason that needs to be addressed.

Lack of foreplay is the most common reason women struggle to build up fluid. Lube is not the answer in this situation. Communication, asking for more time, and showing your partner what works for you to open and turn on is the only way to increase your personal lubrication. Tune in to your body and share with your partner what you look and feel like when you are relaxed. What helps your vagina and vulva open, increase blood flow, and become sensitive to touch? Only when you are open and ready should penetration occur. You are allowed to say you are not ready, you need more time, and here is what will help.

Lack of emotional connection is the second reason women have lost interest in sex. We spend more time away from our partners or time is spent together as a family, leaving little room for connection and conversation. Unresolved issues, anger, and resentment put up blocks to your connection. Resolving your issues and bringing your relationship to bed

with a clean slate will help you become more vulnerable and able to express yourself.

You may be missing out on orgasms and this is why you cannot lubricate. Women are taught that there are two types of orgasms. Clitoral which you cannot have during sex and vaginal which is elusive and impossible. Listed below are the 16 different types of orgasms (you might even be able to add to this list) that a woman can experience:

1. Clitoral
2. G-spot
3. Anterior fornix (A spot)
4. Posterior fornix (P spot)
5. Cervical
6. Blended (different types at one time)
7. Breast/nipple
8. Squirting
9. Anal
10. Oral/throat
11. Mind/emotional
12. Exercise induced
13. Pain/bondage induced
14. U spot
15. Sleep
16. Whole body

Deeper vaginal orgasms, a variety of orgasms, in different ways, and more often during sex

will automatically increase your lubrication. Teaching your body to relax and allow these types of orgasms takes time and practice. You can play with these areas on your own or with your partner. Using different shaped toys like the Njoy can help you find these areas, change the pressure and movement, and decide what you prefer. There is no requirement to experience every type of orgasm, but you will find the more deeply you have an orgasm, physically and emotionally, the more satisfying your sexual life will become.

Tuning into your body, cycles, and emotions will also help you navigate what you want and when. It is always a good idea to track your cycle on an app or calendar and let your partner know when your period will be arriving. On my calendar I type in "PMS DELUXE PACKAGE" as fair warning to my husband. One day on the way out to the grocery store he asked "do you want the PMS deluxe package??" and brought home chocolate, wine, and my favorite treats. I am so lucky!

In the beginning of your cycle, as estrogen raises, you will feel more confident, passionate, and ready for sex as you near ovulation. You might be willing to skip foreplay and go right to your favorite

activities. But after ovulation this passion may slow down. You may enter the stage of not wanting to be touched, or desire intimacy but without actually having sex. Craving more emotional connection, non-sexual touch, and slowing down is normal. Your capacity for pain and experimentation may decrease as well. Knowing your own cycle will help your partner understand why and when you pull away. Men can be extremely confused, lose their confidence in their abilities, and doubt your love when one week you were jumping on top of him and the next week you cannot stand the thought of him and sex. Be compassionate with your partner, share your cycle and different needs, and keep asking and reminding him. Write it down, email it, put your cycle on the schedule, whatever it takes to communicate and keep the connection and intimacy throughout your whole cycle.

Body confidence is a topic that I struggle writing about. It is the area I struggle with most and I feel hypocritical writing this section. Be confident! Love yourself! But in reality, self-love is much easier said than done.

It has been said if you don't like the way you look to get up and change it. Start exercising, eating right, hire a trainer and nutritionist. Lose weight, post your transformation

pictures online, and then you will be ready! But what happens when you do literally everything you can but you look the same? You feel the same? What happens when you struggle year after year with your weight, stretch marks, surgery scars, and everyone around you seems to lose weight so easily?

Focusing on punishing yourself, denying yourself pleasure from food, connection, love, and sex, and turning away from your partner doesn't help you look or feel better. Punishing yourself punishes everyone. You are designed to experience and embody love and that is completely independent from how you look physically.

Yes, there are jerk partners who will say that their woman needs to lose weight, tighten up, or dress differently. I have nothing polite to say here except to get you both to counseling and re-evaluate the relationships.

When you hide your body, your face, and deny your partner the experience of loving you just the way you are, you cut yourself off from love. You disconnect from your body, your orgasms, your wetness, and your passion. No wonder sex is dead, you cannot get wet, and you have lost your libido.

Actions that have helped me move forward with my insecurities include exercise, despite not automatically turning into a bikini competitor. I feel my best, most confident, and most self-loving when I strength train and move my body every single day. Lifting is no longer about weight or fat loss and it is solely for my emotional life. Eating to my personal meal plan is also key to my confidence. Mainly because it is great to not be bloated and sick every night and turn down sex, but also because I feel clear, energized, and my hormones are balanced. I eat to fuel my body and my brain.

I think about how I would feel if my husband was shy, self-deprecating, and ashamed (basically if he acted like me). I would be angry, offended, and miserable. Never in my life would I want him to feel badly about himself or his body. I imagine how I would feel if he was self-conscious and hid around me. Knowing how this would make me feel, I have changed my behavior because I do not want him to feel offended because of my feelings about myself. Today, in this moment, you can make the decision to value yourself because of who you are, not based on how your body looks or feels, but because you are an amazing person just as you are.

I have begun to accept compliments from my husband and others. Usually when he says something nice like “You look great today!” I fire back with as much negativity as I can. “Ugh. It’s only because I’m wearing more makeup, and I gained two pounds, and nothing fits, and I hate my body.” Writing this I have to say I married a saint of a man who is still complimenting me every day despite me turning his compliments into a barrage of insults. When I decided to change this, I had to build myself up. At first, I just said “hmmm” to his compliments. It was a major difference not firing back. Then I started saying “Thank you” (but not in a nice tone). I am still working on saying “Thank you! I feel great today! I love these jeans” (without sarcasm). I am a work in progress when it comes to compliments but I share this so you can see the patterns and ways you put yourself down and give away your power and confidence.

Another technique for women to connect to their body is daily breast massage. The Taoist deer massage is an excellent tool to increase lymph flow to drain the breasts and heart, but it also allows you to take the time every day to connect to your body, awaken your sexuality, and feel good about yourself. You can use fractionated coconut oil with clary sage or lavender for the massage or even use rose

lotion. Start by sitting with your heel resting against your clitoris. If you cannot reach your heel up you can use a tennis ball. This will help increase the energy flow within your body. In circular motions massage the whole breast in one motion. You will go in both directions, clockwise and counter-clockwise. In each direction do at least 36 rotations. Inner thigh massage either daily or as foreplay because of pressure points will also help lymph and blood flow. You can do this yourself or have your partner help you.

If you aren't feeling comfortable in your own skin or are not feeling confident in your body, try diffusing cinnamon oil while you are getting dressed, taking a bath, or getting ready for your night. Cinnamon is a 'hot' or caustic oil and MUST be diluted before using topically as a massage lotion.

Allow yourself to be touched. Avoiding touch reinstates feelings of unworthiness and solidifies fears of being rejected. I always avoided having my belly touched after having children. I hate stretchmarks, skin, and just the feeling of being touched there. But when I surrendered to touch, vulnerability, and love I found that I love having my belly touched. I feel more loved, accepted, and appreciated.

Feeling good naked can happen at the flip of a switch and I don't mean turning off the lights. You alone have the power to decide how you look and feel. You alone have the power to decide your level of confidence and openness and you deserve to love and be loved just for being you!

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# Bonus: Optimal Fertility

Planning to have a baby is exciting, but information on when and how to get pregnant can be overwhelming. The optimal time to start thinking about preparing your body and mind for pregnancy is six to twelve months prior to trying to conceive. Understanding your own cycle and how your body is functioning is very important to optimal fertility and planning a pregnancy. Let's examine the basics and review some physiology.

## Fertility after Birth Control

Most pharmaceutical birth control pamphlets will state that the drug does not affect future fertility and women will be able to conceive within the next few months after stopping their birth control. Some women have found that their hormones have a more difficult time normalizing after stopping their medication, and therefore difficulty achieving pregnancy.

Start with a purification program to help the liver and fat cleanse out stored hormones from

the medication. Next increase your daily intake of fiber through food or supplements. Fiber will attach to excess hormones and toxins to move them out of your body, which is why fiber is important in a purification program. Other supplements for liver and ovary support are important as well as anti-oxidants and detox supplements.

Continue to chart your fertility signs to monitor if you have started to ovulate and that your progesterone levels are high enough after ovulation to support a pregnancy. Your temperature after ovulation must remain high for at least 10 days after ovulation, which shows that your progesterone levels are relatively at a healthy level to support a pregnancy. If your temperature is dropping or low (close to your pre-ovulatory temperature) after ovulation you may need progesterone supplementation or a B vitamin to support progesterone production.

### Fertility After (Or During) Cervical and Uterine Disorders and Diseases

Women who have undergone testing or surgery to their cervix and uterus have higher rates of miscarriage, pre-term birth and scarring which prevents vaginal birth.

If you have undergone any procedure to your cervix including but not limited to LEEP, colposcopy, D&E, D&C or other testing where portions of the cervix or uterus were removed it is important to support your health now to prevent any future issues with your upcoming pregnancy. This also includes if you have previously or currently have abnormal PAP smears, have been diagnosed with HPV, cervical dysplasia or cancer.

Risk factors for cervical dysplasia include a diagnosis of HPV, long term use of hormonal birth control, smoking, and chronic vaginal infections.

If you have had trauma to your cervix, including previous births it is important to address that now. Begin with a detoxification program to regulate your hormone levels. Add in natural sources of Vitamin B12 and Folic acid, as birth control lowers the levels of these vitamins which are integral and protective to the health of your cervix. Also, use a sublingual source of progesterone, which is usually only sold through health care practitioners. Supplements specific to boosting the immune system should be utilized as well as supplements to support the uterus. If you are interested in learning more about this protocol and the specific types of supplements

I recommend please send an email to me and the current supplement names and prices will be forwarded to you.

An internal douche should be performed every other day and can be purchased from nutritional companies such as Bezwecken through a practitioner. You can also make your own with 1ml of golden seal liquid and 1ml of wheat germ oil. Place the mixture on a diaphragm or use a dropper to insert into the vagina near the cervix. The diaphragm should not be left in more than thirty minutes and the application should be done every other day. Using this program more than once a day or daily will inflame the cervix and worsen your condition.

Most importantly, avoid hormonal birth control, spermicides, commercial douches, tampons, and soaking in tubs with bath products, as these all inflame the cervix.

# About The Author

Since 2005, Dr. Alison DiBarto Goggin has been studying and practicing nutrition, applied kinesiology, Reiki, and functional medicine. She graduated from Logan College of Chiropractic in 2009. She resides in Saint Louis, Missouri with her husband and two children.

Little Black Bag Medicine is a functional wellness practice that offers flexible telemedicine and phone or video consultations.

You can find out more about working with Dr. DiBarto-Goggin through individual consultations and programs at [www.LittleBlackBagMedicine.com](http://www.LittleBlackBagMedicine.com)

