

FEMALE HORMONES AND METABOLISM – PART II

As we continue our conversation from last month, let's review... We introduced the seven hormones, that, if unbalanced, can result in a "broken metabolism" or weight gain no matter how hard we restrict exercise or drink gallons of water. These hormones are Estrogen, Insulin, Cortisol, Thyroid, Testosterone and Growth Hormone. Last month we addressed Estrogen, Insulin and Leptin. You can always check out Part I at thetodaypapers.com if you missed it. Let's move on and then somehow tie them all together.

CORTISOL is made in the adrenal glands and is often called the "stress hormone" because of its connection to the stress response. It is actually much more than just a hormone released during stress. Blood levels of cortisol vary throughout the day, higher in the a.m. and lower as the day goes on. When cortisol is too high or low that's when we run into problems. Some of the effects of cortisol include blood sugar regulation, salt/water balance (blood pressure), memory and energy. In the U.S., coffee is definitely our favorite upper despite the fact that it is highly addictive. No one loves a good cup of coffee more than I do, however...caffeine can result in overall stimulation or cortisol spikes. Since cortisol is a fat-storage hormone, this would not be great for our metabolism. It can also interfere with normal blood pressure and sound sleep, insulin resistance, and then, ultimately, type 2 diabetes.

THYROID. When our goal is to be as lean as possible, eating grains that contain gluten is throwing gasoline on a fire! Grains have a higher glycemic index and cause inflammation, craving and belly fat. Grains also interfere with hormone levels of leptin, thyroid and insulin. Approximately 20 years ago we were told to eat more grains and take the fat out of our diets, since then the diagnosis of diabetes has tripled. Grains, even gluten free, contain harmful lectins and phytates that can cause "leaky gut" or intestinal permeability. Believe it or not, up to 80% of the population lacks sufficient enzymes needed to break down and assimilate gluten. This can lead to over stimulation of the immune system and then autoimmune conditions like Hashimoto's Thyroiditis. Here's where the Paleo diet fits in perfectly. Our Paleolithic ancestors were adapted to a diet high in fiber, clean proteins and phytonutrients. It sort of makes sense then, that many of us have not "adapted" to eating grains. In the spectrum of problems with gluten, we can range from no symptoms to full-blown celiac disease. Most of us may exist somewhere in the middle with mild to moderate, almost vague symptoms such as increased appetite and "wheat belly" or increased belly fat.

TESTOSTERONE. Here's the part where we talk about the "toxic burden" of the human body. Environmental exposure to toxins is definitely on the rise. We may eat genetically modified (GM) foods sprayed with pesticides and fertilizers, we use cosmetics with synthetic chemicals and use household cleaning products that are potentially toxic. These chemicals or endocrine disruptors are actually stored in our fat cells. They have the potential to make us insulin and leptin resistant, more inflamed and more susceptible to autoimmune disorders. Let's also mention bisphenol A (BPA), found in plastic water bottles, store receipts and canned foods. They disrupt estrogen, thyroid and androgen hormones. They mess with our metabolism, fertility, ovulation and can result in certain cancers. So, how do we get rid of these toxins? The liver, our body's natural filter, is designed to purify the blood and remove toxins in two phases. Most of us are so toxic that we may need some help with this by doing a structured gentle cleanse several times per year.

GROWTH HORMONE. What is one of the top foods that contributes to inflammation (a state that causes us to gain weight and become resistant to losing it)? Dairy, specifically cows' milk dairy. Yes, I was also raised on dairy, because the American Dairy Association and the AMA told our parents it was good for us and would build strong bones and teeth. Did you know that humans are the only mammals that drink milk as adults? Dairy and (gluten) is one of the most common food sensitivities, causing constant stress and inflammation in the gut. Ever wonder why dairy is so addictive? Dairy products contain "casomorphins", protein fragments that come from the digestion of the milk protein, casein. Casomorphins are opioids that keep us addicted, like heroin and morphine. It's also constipating like opiate painkillers. Let's talk about Growth Hormone. Growth Hormone, as well as cortisol determines how much fat we deposit on our bellies. Synthetic growth hormone, which is injected into about a third of the nation's dairy cows, can increase a cow's milk output by 10-15% and fatten them up. The solution? Try dairy alternatives like almond, coconut or hemp milk. Get your protein from wild-caught, cold-water fish, grass-fed beef, pasteurized eggs, nuts/seeds. Eat lots of fresh veggies (fiber) to fill you up. Trade your conventional butter for pasteurized ghee (has no milk solids or casein).

There is no easy fix for a broken metabolism. It takes lots of hard work and persistence. Hopefully, this article and last month's article will give us all a place to start.



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Dow Plaza • 1819 Highway 35 North
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