

Top Ten Hormone Balancing Foods

1. Maca



Maca is known as a hormonal adaptogen, which essentially means it contains nutrients that help balance hormones. How does it help? First it helps balance adrenal cortisol levels that may be out of balance due to stress. It can help to prevent the effects of high cortisol and improve the function of the adrenals despite low cortisol. It also helps with low thyroid function, stabilizes blood sugar levels and improves energy levels. Maca also help with sexual function. For women, it can help with menstrual cycles, fertility, menopausal symptoms, improve bone health and muscle mass, and help libido. For men, it helps with libido and energy levels, improves testosterone levels, improves bone and muscles mass, helps with prostate function, fertility and erectile dysfunction.

How to use: Maca is a root vegetable that is available as a powder in a package or as a capsule or an extract. To use it in recipes, the powder goes well with ingredients like chocolate in a smoothie or in dips like guacamole or legume dishes. Strong flavors like garlic, onions, cumin and cayenne also work with maca.

2. Schizandra

Schizandra is a berry but it is not known for its tastiness, which is a shame as it has many benefits. It is an adrenal adaptogen, meaning it can help balance cortisol levels whether they are high or low. It also supports the health of the liver, the kidneys and the nervous system, stabilizes blood sugar and improves thyroid function. Schizandra can also boost libido in both men and women.

How to use: Schizandra can be found as dried berries, ground up as a powder and concentrated, or in capsule or tincture form. To add it to recipes, it goes best with other berries and citrus juice. It is easily added to a smoothie.



3. Sea Vegetables



Nori, dulse, kelp, arame are all examples of sea vegetables. They are good sources of iodine, selenium and zinc which are key nutrients the thyroid needs to function optimally. While there are many reasons for thyroid malfunction, helping the thyroid requires providing it with the nutrients it needs.

How to use: Sea vegetables can be found as the dried vegetable or as a powder. They also are available in capsules. Sea vegetables can have a strong fishy taste so they work best in recipes with other strong flavors such as garlic, onions, cayenne or cumin. Arame is virtually tasteless so it may be the one that is the easiest to work with. Nori which is used in making sushi is also pretty mild tasting and of course, sushi is a great way to consume it.

4. Chia Seeds and Hemp Seeds

Both chia and hemp seeds are a great source of essential fatty acids; Omega 3 and Omega 6, two fats we need to get in our diet. Chia has more Omega 3 and hemp has more Omega 6. Essential fatty acids (EFAs) are needed to support the liver, the adrenals, the thyroid, the nervous system and help with intestinal health. They also can provide reproductive support for both men and women.

How to use: Both come as seeds. Hemp can be sprinkled on salads, added to smoothies or ground into a flour and used for a percentage of the flour in recipes. Chia can be mixed with water and turned into a gel which can be added to any recipe. It is a great binding agent when it is ground as it contains a high percentage of soluble fiber, which also acts as a prebiotic to feed our good gut bacteria. It also works well in smoothies, salad dressing and baked goods such as cookies and muffins.



5. Broccoli/Kale



As members of the cruciferous vegetable family, broccoli and kale contain two different phytochemicals, indole -3-carbinols and sulforaphanes. Both help detox out excess estrogen and support overall liver detoxification. They also both contain prebiotic fiber that helps feed our good gut bacteria

How to use: Kale and broccoli can be added to salads, vegetable dishes and smoothies. They are suitable both cooked and raw. If consuming kale raw, be sure to either grind it well in a smoothie or let it sit for a while in salad dressing, in order to soften it as it contains a lot of insoluble fiber.

6. Grapefruit/Apples

These are two key foods that contain calcium d'glucurate, another phytochemical that helps detox out excess estrogen. They both also support the overall ability of the liver to detoxify and are both prebiotic foods that can feed good gut bacteria.

How to use: As fruits, apples and grapefruits are ready to eat and this may be the simplest way to consume them. However, they work well in muffins, smoothies and salads and can be added easily to other recipes where fruits are used.



7. Jerusalem Artichokes



This is a superfood by all definitions. It supports all phases of liver detoxification, stabilizes blood sugar and is one of the highest foods with prebiotic fiber to feed the gut. They are not always easy to find but look for them in the fall and winter and if not available in the grocery store, then look in health food and specialty stores. It is becoming more common to find them year round.

How to use: They have the taste and texture of a cross between a potato and a radish. They work well in any recipe that uses potatoes. Substitute all or just a portion of the potato content in any recipe. Also, they work well in dip recipes, as an addition to a smoothie or raw, sliced on a veggie platter. You can also remove a portion of the flour in a bread or muffin recipe and replace it with Jerusalem artichokes.

8. Garlic/Onions

Both garlic and onions are sulfur-rich foods, which supports detoxification activities of the liver. They are also both excellent prebiotic foods and have antimicrobial properties. They deliver flavor and nutrients to any dish where they are added but it is choice of personal taste which one you use or if you use both.

How to use: Onions and garlic are great in most savory dips, soups, entrées or vegetable dishes. Onions can be added to a salad or a sandwich and garlic is good in salad dressing.



9. Kefir

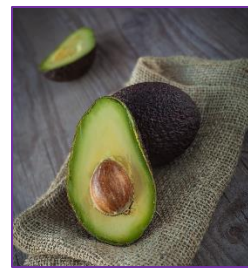


As a probiotic food, milk kefir made with kefir grains, is at the top of the list. Not all kefir is made with kefir grains so ask about a kefir product in the store where you shop or contact the manufacturer to ask if it is made with kefir grains. It has 32 strains of good bacteria and yeast, making it the most potent fermented food. With the complex relationship between our hormones and our gut bacteria, this food is a must. For those who cannot consume dairy, the kefir grains can be used in coconut milk. You can buy the grains from Kombucha Kamp or other sources or perhaps find someone who has some to donate to you. It is easy to make and requires no technology. Just add the grains to the milk in a jar with a lid and let it sit for 24-48 hours on the counter. Be sure to add pureed dates to feed the grains when using coconut milk as they need carbohydrates and coconut milk does not contain any.

How to Use: Kefir can be consumed as it is just like yogurt or add your favorite fruits to give it flavor. It can also be used in baking, like milk and in salad dressings and dips. Add it to a smoothie which will make the smoothie even more beneficial.

10. Avocado, olive oil, coconut oil and butter (or ghee)

Hormone health needs good quality fats. First, hormones are made from fat so we need to eat enough fat to make the hormones we need. Specific fatty acids have various roles. Coconut oil contains antifungal caprylic acid and antibacterial lauric acid. Avocados and its oil contain phytoestrogens which can help balance hormones and they can help stimulate metabolism. Olive oil helps create healthy cell membranes which allow hormones to better adhere to them and work more effectively. Butter or its clarified version known as ghee, contains butyrate, a short chain fatty acid that helps gut health and inhibits inflammation. It also contains cholesterol which is a building block for steroid hormones such as cortisol, estrogen, testosterone and progesterone.



How to use: These fats are great for sautéing, roasting and baking. Avocado oil and olive oil are wonderful in salad dressings. Coconut oil and butter are delicious in muffins, cakes, pies and cookies.

Honourable Mention

Milk Thistle:



Milk thistle is a seed that has amazing properties to help the liver function better. It not only supports the liver detoxification process; it helps repair liver cells. Hormone health requires a healthy liver so this would be worth adding to the diet:

How to Use: It does come in capsule and tincture form but to add it to the diet, make it as a tea. One cup water to 1 tsp milk thistle seeds. Bring to a boil, cover and lower to simmer. Let it simmer for 15 minutes. More water can be added if needed.

Culinary Herbs

Not only do they add flavor to recipes, culinary herbs add nutrients and help with hormone health. Cinnamon helps menstrual periods, fertility and stabilizes blood sugar which can help lower and prevent insulin resistance and support the adrenal glands. Cayenne, ginger, cumin, parsley, dill and turmeric are known as hormone balancers and are also good for gut health.

How to use: This is the fun part. Pick the ones you like and flavor your soups, salads, smoothies and all your savoury dishes.



The Truth About Phytoestrogens:

They are not estrogen and only contain minute amounts of estrogen with virtually no power. They can lock onto estrogen receptor sites and block real estrogen from locking on, forcing it to be detoxed out of the body. They also help promote anti-cancer estrogen metabolites. When estrogen levels are high, they help remove the more powerful estrogen and when it is low, they can trick the body into thinking that needed estrogen is there, allowing the activity to occur. For example, estrogen locking onto a bone-making cell receptor site triggers the process of making bone. A phytoestrogen locking onto the same receptor cell can do the same thing.

Where are phytoestrogens found? Everywhere. Not only are they in soy and flaxseeds but they are also found in other legumes, nuts, seeds, fruits and vegetables, even red wine. They are a part of a plant's immune system and cannot be avoided if eating a healthy, whole food diet. The key is understanding that they do not need to be avoided and for healthy hormones, they are beneficial for both men and women.