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## Hormones Part III: Optimal Levels of Cortisol, Insulin and Thyroid are Essential to Vibrant Health

by Barbara Minton, Natural Health Editor

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(NaturalNews) People of today are seeking quality of life, in the midst of a polluted world, an onslaught of chemicals, and a medical establishment educated to reflect corporate interests rather than the interests of patients. They live in a country where the number one gross national product is stress. On top of that, they are the generation whose future is being diminished by the implementation globalism and the move toward one world government. Now more than ever, it is imperative for people to keep themselves at the peak of health, a peak that is based on a foundation of optimal and balanced hormone levels. It is this hormonal foundation that is the bedrock of support for people trying to live the life they want in today's world.

All the stress and chemicals in the environment along with poor diet choices have caused people to experience hormonal decline at an earlier and earlier age. Hormonal imbalance is showing up in men and women as early as the late twenties. Many people in their thirties are in unrecognized hormonal decline that saps their energy, causes weight gain, and makes their thinking foggy, rendering them into a state where they are unable to act in their own best interests. They are experiencing record levels of depression and sleeplessness. Their traditional physicians answer their symptoms with the prescription pad, adding even more chemicals to the pile without addressing the causes of these symptoms. This failure to address hormonal imbalance by the traditional medical establishment means that people who want to live a long, happy, disease-free life will need to intervene on their own.

Each of the hormones oversees an area of bodily processes, and each person is only as healthy as his or her weakest hormone. The hormonal orchestra requires optimal levels of each player. When one hormone is in decline, the imbalance means the rest will soon follow, causing a downward cascade of all bodily processes. Low levels of estrogen, progesterone, or testosterone lead to erratic production of thyroid, insulin, and cortisol. High cortisol levels and low thyroid levels cause weight gain even when you are eating less and exercising. When cortisol levels are high, sleep is impossible, but heart attack is a real possibility. Knowing what the major hormones do in the body and what happens when you start to lose them will make you aware of how critical they are to your overall health and well being. These hormones are called major because you cannot live without them. When they fall out of balance, the risk of death is increased.

### Cortisol is the body's stress hormone

Everybody has seen people with high cortisol levels. They are the ones who run around like maniacs trying to achieve. The super woman and the power executive are stereotypes of the high cortisol person. Cortisol is also the hormone of road rage.

Cortisol production increases in response to any stress in the body. It is the body's survival mechanism, pouring hormone when the fight or flight mechanism is engaged. Cortisol is what allows a mother to lift up a car to save her child. Or what powers a person running away from an attacker. It's cortisol

that gives us the clarity of mind, swiftness and co-ordination of movement, enhanced strength and courage we need to see our way out of threatening situations. These threats can be physical, or psychological.

Cortisol is a steroid hormone made in the adrenal glands. It regulates blood pressure and cardiovascular function as well as the body's use of proteins, carbohydrates and fats. When cortisol is secreted, it causes a breakdown of muscle protein, leading to release of amino acids into the blood stream. These amino acids are used by the liver to synthesize glucose for energy. Cortisol leads to the release of energy from fat cells to be used by the muscles. These actions ensure that the brain and body have the energy resources they need for defense.

The problem comes when stress becomes chronic, causing the adrenal glands to continuously produce cortisol. This can lead to overtaxed adrenals that eventually become unable to function. High cortisol levels prevent sleep. When you do not sleep, more hormonal imbalance will follow and the stage becomes set for the onset of degenerative disease. One of the primary causes of continuous physiological stress in women is declining hormone levels. Low estrogen level in the body puts it under a tremendous and continuous stress load. When female hormones are replaced, the ability to sleep returns even in the face of continuing exogenous stress.

There are people who seem to seek out stressful situations and like living on the edge. The continuous flow of cortisol becomes addictive when it translates into feelings of power and euphoria. These people are on their way to adrenal exhaustion. If adrenal exhaustion gets to be severe, it can result in death. Signs of overtaxed adrenal glands are exhaustion, hair falling out, weight gain, irritability, and probably the most telltale sign of all, skin rashes and acne.

When cortisol is doing its job, life seems easy. Stress does not get you down or keep you awake. If cortisol levels are too low, the mood becomes affected. Anxiety begins its downward pull, and you are upset by things you normally would just ignore. Feeling paralyzed between confrontation and escape is a sign of low cortisol as is inability to think clearly in a stressful situation.

Cortisol levels decline with age making it easier for older people to end up with adrenal fatigue. It becomes particularly important at this stage to be able to manage stress effectively. People who are unable to manage their stress for long periods of time are subject to heart attack, stroke and cancer. When stress levels are continuously high as they are in modern life, there is little extra cortisol left to use in your defense when you really need it. If you are unable to bounce back after a particularly stressful physical or psychological encounter, a time out period or a vacation is needed.

Lupus, osteoporosis, fibromyalgia, sugar or salt cravings, digestive problems and allergies may indicate high cortisol. Other symptoms are feeling overly stressed, confusion, skin problems, respiratory difficulties, difficulty concentrating, and indifference toward sex.

Weight gain is a problem of low cortisol. People with fatigued adrenal glands from excessive production of cortisol tend to overeat as a way to bolster sagging energy levels. They frequently crave high calorie processed foods because those will prompt a quick energy release. Unfortunately, that quick energy boost is then followed by an even greater energy sag.

Cortisol secretion is promoted by the presence of even the tiniest bit of light. This is why it is so important to sleep in a room that is completely dark with no alarm clock glowing in the dark. Researchers did a study of one hundred subjects who were placed in a completely dark room with the exception of a pin point of light on the back of their knees. Cortisol levels rose in each subject as a result.

Bio-identical cortisol is available by prescription as a last resort for adrenal exhaustion. It needs to be taken religiously four times every day to be effective.

### **Insulin has a profound effect on aging**

Everybody has heard about insulin as it relates to diabetes. Even so, many Americans continue to push

their bodies closer to the brink of this disease by overeating processed carbohydrates. They are so addicted to these foods that they refused to admit to themselves that these foods cause diabetes. They prefer to see it as a disease that just happened to single them out for no reason.

Insulin and low blood sugar problems are often the cause of fatigue, irritability, depression, mood swings, poor memory, poor co-ordination, dizziness, and the craving for sweets. Extremely low blood sugar makes you feel like a wet noodle, as though your legs are about to collapse and hurl you to the floor. If blood sugar gets low enough, you will pass and be at risk of death.

Blood sugar (glucose) is the fuel for the body. Balanced blood sugar levels generate mental clarity and ease of physical activity. Excessive intake of grains and other carbohydrates, particularly processed carbohydrates, can create havoc with this balance. All carbohydrates break down into sugar in the body and cause a roller-coaster reaction, destabilizing blood sugar levels.

Insulin is secreted by the pancreas to control the sugar level in the blood. It moves sugar into the cells for use in energy production. When the body is flooded with sugar, the pancreas responds with high insulin production, driving so much sugar into the cells that the levels in the blood become too low, resulting in plummeting energy levels and mood swings. In time, this constant overproduction of insulin creates serious metabolic disturbances throughout the body, including insulin resistance and diabetes.

Elevated insulin levels cause the body to have difficulty breaking down fat, promoting weight gain. Increased blood pressure and free radical activity follow, accelerating aging and the development of disease. Insulin resistance and pre-diabetes have finally been linked to the onset of menopause in journals such as the *Journal of Metabolism and Endocrinology*, and the *Journal of Reproductive Medicine*.

The bedrock of protection against the high tide of insulin in the body is hormonal balance. After hormones have become balanced, diet becomes another important part of the health regimen with its emphasis on eating whole foods rather than foods that are processed. Carbohydrates should never be eaten alone, but always in conjunction with protein foods. A good rule of thumb is that grams of carbohydrates in any form should not exceed grams of protein at any meal. This makes a chocolate bar with nuts a much better choice than a plain chocolate bar. It seems to go against common sense that a cookie eaten alone will cause greater weight gain than a cookie eaten with a chicken leg, but the chicken leg slows the insulin response to a more normal level. Five minutes of moderate exercise following a meal will also significantly reduce the insulin response.

Foods in their raw state do not product the high level of insulin response that is produced from cooked foods. Anyone who eats carbohydrates unbalanced by protein will probably not achieve the best results from their hormone balancing efforts. Keeping the body well mineralized with supplements such as alfalfa also helps to slow the insulin response.

### **The thyroid is the master gland of metabolism**

Thyroid is the most important hormone since it stimulates cellular energy production. The production of the all other hormones will be impacted when thyroid hormone declines. Every aspect of health will be affected by a poorly functioning thyroid including weight, mental outlook, body temperature, energy level, and the quality of hair and skin. Symptoms of low thyroid hormone are unexplained weight gain, fatigue, dry skin, irregular heartbeat, sleep apnea, high blood pressure, chronic pain, constipation, frequent infections, brittle nails, muscle weakness, low blood pressure, head congestion and sinus problems, joint or muscle pain, hoarseness, and more. Low thyroid levels slow metabolism and energy production. This is why people with low thyroid hormone are always cold, constipated and gain weight without increasing the amount of food they eat.

Selenium is needed for the proper conversion of thyroid hormone. Unbalanced estrogen suppresses thyroid function. Mercury is a thyroid gland contaminate. Stress causes decreased adrenal gland function and prevents the thyroid from functioning optimally.

At the center of each cell is the mitochondria, often referred to as the cellular furnace. It is in this furnace that cellular energy is produced, and it is thyroid hormone that stokes the furnace. Without

enough thyroid hormone, the fire begins to go out. This is why old people seem so listless and their simplest movement seems like such a chore. It is as though they have run out of energy and come to a standstill. Younger people also frequently show symptoms of low cellular energy. These are the people who fall asleep in meeting and while reading a book. When cellular energy gets low enough, you literally cannot stay awake and will eventually die.

Thyroid problems develop at any age and usually go so slowly as to remain unnoticed in the beginning. At least 27 million Americans are estimated to have an undiagnosed thyroid problem, and most of them are females. Depression and panic attacks are additional symptoms of thyroid problems that seem to plague only women. If you are tired when you get up after a good night's sleep or need a nap or two to get through the day, you may have a thyroid problem. Hair falls out and beauty suffers when thyroid hormone is low. The wisdom of the body redirects the hormone away from hair, nails and skin for use in more critical processes.

Most traditional physicians are reluctant to consider thyroid functioning at all. When they do, the standard of care for people with symptoms is to be administered a thyroid hormone stimulating test (TSH). The thinking is that a low score on the TSH usually means the body is not trying to stimulate thyroid production so therefore thyroid production must be OK. A high score on the TSH usually means the thyroid is not functioning well and that is why the body is trying to stimulate it. Needless to say, this approach misses a lot. The best way to see what your thyroid is up to is to insist on blood testing of TSH, and T3 and T4, the thyroid hormones.

Low thyroid can easily be corrected by adding natural, bio-identical thyroid hormone to the amount being produced by the body. Armour Thyroid is available by prescription. It is thyroid from pigs which is the exact bio-equivalent of thyroid produced by humans. It will be recognized by the body as a natural substance and no side effects will be produced. Most traditional physicians try to convince their patients to use synthetic thyroid replacements, so be prepared to be assertive if you want to use only natural substances.

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## About the author

Barbara is a school psychologist, a published author in the area of personal finance, a breast cancer survivor using "alternative" treatments, a born existentialist, and a student of nature and all things natural.

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