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Hormones Part I: Hormonal Balance is the Key to Vibrant Health for Women

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(NaturalNews) Hormones fill us with the music of life. With proper levels of hormones, there is no end to how good life can feel and what can be accomplished. When hormones are abundant and balanced, we have the full backing of Mother Nature. She is on our side, wanting to keep us alive and healthy enough for reproduction. When hormones decline and reproductive ability ceases, we are no longer useful in the scheme of life, and we are taken out just like a quarterback who can no longer perform. In the past several years there has been a tremendous effort in America to convince women that their hormones are their enemies. But the truth is that no matter how much organic food you eat, how many supplements you take, and how much exercise you get, vibrant health will elude you unless your hormones are at optimal levels and balanced.

Why the medical establishment ignores bioidentical hormones

For several decades women were given synthetic hormone substitution referred to as HRT. The products used were laboratory created or conjugated compounds that in no way replicated what is naturally produced in the female body. Then many studies showed in a big way that some of these patented compounds were dangerous to health, just like many other products made by pharmaceutical companies to treat a variety of diseases. When the results of this test became public, women were frightened, and well meaning physicians who knew no other alternative to HRT stopped prescribing these hormone drugs. That was the end of hormone replacement for women in America.

In Europe, bioidentical hormones have been used by women for decades. Bioidenticals are plant-derived molecularly identical replicas of the hormones naturally produced by the human body. Prescriptions for bioidentical hormones can be tailored to the specific treatment needs of each patient, allowing for flexibility in administration and dosage. Numerous studies published in highly respected international journals have demonstrated the safety and efficacy of bio-identical hormone replacement therapy. If this information became mainstream knowledge in America, it would eliminate women's fears and spark a stampede to get prescriptions for bioidentical hormones. Unfortunately, medicine in the U.S. continues to be held in the grip of pharmaceutical companies.

Medical students are taught to administer pharmaceuticals, and it is the pharmaceutical companies that provide the on-the-job-training for physicians. It is not in the best interests of these companies to mention bioidentical hormones since they are natural substances and therefore cannot be patented. There is little or no money to be made by the pharmaceutical companies from bioidentical hormones. Women and also men who do not receive bioidentical hormone replacement when their hormone levels decline are almost guaranteed to develop degenerative disease and misery, conditions most beneficial to the pharmaceutical industry.

Hormonal loss begins long before menopause

There is a tendency to think that reproductive hormone levels are fine until menopause sets in sometime around age 55. In reality, hormone levels in women start to fall off as early as age 30 and

accelerate from there, with testosterone levels being the first to fall. Periods become irregular and unpredictable, mood changes, signs of PMS develop, hair begins to thin, and weight gain starts to be a problem. One of the surest signs that testosterone levels are declining is a loss of libido. Sexual activity that used to seem so beautiful, satisfying and sharing can become almost a nuisance. With declining testosterone levels, the vibrant woman that was you begins to disappear.

As the hormonal imbalance accelerates, these symptoms are joined by night sweats, anxiety, depression, fatigue, loss of energy, headaches, loss of focus and attention, poor muscle tone, decreased exercise tolerance, osteoporosis, rising cholesterol levels, cardiac dysfunction, inability to tolerate stress, memory loss and cognitive decline. At this point that person who used to be you is effectively gone and nothing but hormone replacement will bring her back.

Nursing homes are full of women. Forty percent of them are there as the result of breaking one of their brittle bones. Most of the other 60 are there because their brains have deteriorated to the point where they can no longer be trusted to care for themselves. Hormone deficiency is responsible for this situation. If these women had received bioidentical hormone replacement earlier in life, the risks of fracture, osteoporosis and dementia would have been greatly reduced. Most of these women would be living out their golden years leading active, satisfying and happy lives.

Reproductive hormones are minor hormones with major consequences in the body

Reproductive hormones are called minor hormones because a person can continue to live (sort of) without them. Familiarity with the functions of these hormones will make it easy to tell when symptoms are reflecting hormonal decline or imbalance.

Estrogen is the hormone that produces the essence of femininity. It is powerful stuff that shapes the uniqueness of a woman's mind, emotion and body. Estrogen powers the transformation from childhood to womanhood and sets the stage for implantation and nourishment of the early embryo. It makes a woman feel sensual, bringing fullness to the breasts, clarity to the mind, and moisture to the vagina. Estrogen is the foundation of female pride, vitality and sensuality. It is this essence that is lost when hormonal levels decline.

There are more than 300 bodily systems on which estrogen has a major effect, including many tissues and organs such as brain, liver, bones, skin, urinary tract and circulatory system.

Estrogen deficiency is usually the cause of those awful migraines women suffer during their late 20's and on from there. Estrogen directly decreases inflammation by blocking a molecule called NFkB (nuclear factor kappa beta). NFkB is in large part responsible for inflammation throughout the body. When estrogen levels are low there is nothing to block this molecule and women become vulnerable to migraines.

Symptoms are signals that there is something going on that needs attention and should not be ignored. Memory loss and dropped thoughts are symptoms of hormonal decline and imbalance. Estrogen decreases beta-amyloid plaquing and helps prevent Alzheimer's disease and dementia. It also helps neurons connect to each other in the brain, making replacement of declining levels absolutely critical to brain health in women.

Although traditional doctors and the pharmaceutical industry would like women to believe otherwise, several recent studies have shown that estrogen is the factor behind the decreasing rates of breast cancer in menopausal women who are supplementing their declining estrogen levels. When ovaries are removed or become atrophied during menopause, the breasts start to produce more estrogen, because there is an aromatase enzyme that turns on. A study reported by Dr. Khalid Mahmud involved removal of the ovaries in baboons, a species quite similar to humans. The baboons were then given estrogen. This supplemental estrogen turned off the aromatase production in the breasts of the baboons. This is the classical negative feedback loop. Baboons got supplemental estrogen and it acted as an aromatase inhibitor. The study suggests that giving bioidentical estrogen to females who are no longer producing adequate amounts of it because they are in menopause reduces the production of estrogen in the breasts.

Women who are perceived to be at high risk of breast cancer by the medical establishment or who have already had breast tumors removed are typically placed on Tamoxifen or other aromatase inhibitors such as arimidex, femara and aromasin, drugs that often produce debilitating side effects. If these women were given bioidentical estrogen along with progesterone and testosterone, they would be giving their bodies what they sorely need instead of depleting them of their last bit of this critical hormone.

Estrogen is a broad category with three main members, estradiol, estrone, and estriol. Estradiol is produced in the ovaries by the aromatization process during which the androgen hormone androstenedione is converted to estrone, which is then converted to estradiol. Smaller amounts of estradiol are produced by the adrenal cortex, brain and arterial walls. Testosterone can also be converted to estradiol in the body.

Estradiol is the growth hormone responsible for breast enlargement as well as changes in the body shape affecting bones, joints and fat deposition. It modifies fat structure and skin composition, and plays a significant role in a woman's mental health. Sudden withdrawal, fluctuating levels, and periods of sustained low levels correlate with mood depression and anxiety.

Estradiol has been shown repeatedly in studies to be protective of breast tissue when balanced with progesterone and testosterone. It restrains bone loss, and improves memory and sleep. Estradiol is what gives a woman soft supple skin, a full head of shiny hair, and the radiance associated with the term *beauty*.

Estrone is secreted by the ovaries and the adrenal cortex. It is the only form of estrogen that is naturally present in any quantity in post-menopausal women, hence its nickname *old lady estrogen*. Estrone should exist in an ideal ratio of 1 to 2 with estradiol. As women age and estradiol production declines this ratio becomes unbalanced, a condition that is strongly associated with breast cancer development. This is the primary reason that breast cancer does not usually develop until women have reached menopause and estradiol levels have declined enough to create a serious imbalance in this ratio. In pre-menopausal testosterone can also be converted into excessive estrone, a condition that can be easily prevented by taking supplements of DIM an extract from broccoli. For more information about DIM see <http://www.naturalnews.com/023364.html>.

Estriol is a metabolite of estradiol and estrone, that's made in the placenta during pregnancy. During this very critical time in life when the developing embryo is differentiating into hands, feet, eyeballs, brain and myriad other functional organs, it is bathed in estriol. Dr. John Lee, pioneer researcher of women's hormones, believed that this feature of estriol means it is highly protective of the DNA blueprint, otherwise our species would not have been successful.

As long ago as 1987, estriol was unequivocally shown to be protective against cancer of the breast and uterus in a five-year clinical trial. This protective effect was attributed to ability of estriol to induce a more mature state of the breast glandular cells, rendering them less susceptible to damage by radiation and chemicals. It is this mechanism by which early pregnancy results in as much as a 50 to 70 percent reduction in breast cancer risk later in life: pregnancy raises estriol levels dramatically.

In pregnant women with multiple sclerosis (MS), estriol noticeably reduces disease symptoms according to researchers at UCLA Medical School. MS is a disease that strikes women at the time of hormonal decline.

Progesterone has a calming effect in the body. It builds bone, and is a natural diuretic and fat burner. It restores proper cellular oxygen levels, improves vascular tone, normalizes blood clotting, and prevents cyclical migraines and arterial plaque. Progesterone helps balance the actions of estrogen and acts with estrogen and testosterone to prevent cancer and other degenerative diseases. A low level of progesterone results in irritability, anxiety, obsessive behaviors, weight gain, itching, bloating, sweating, digestive problems, flatulence, and loss of memory.

Progesterone is naturally present in the body only during the second half of the monthly cycle. The declining level of progesterone is what causes breasts to swell and be painful during this time. While

synthetic progestin drugs administered continuously rather than cyclically have been implicated in breast cancer, natural bioidentical progesterone administered during the second half of the menstrual cycle acts to prevent all hormone related cancers. Since progesterone is present in the body naturally for about 15 days a month, replacement bioidentical progesterone should follow this pattern. It is only during pregnancy that progesterone is continuously present in the body for a sustained period of time.

Many women experience estrogen dominance, a term that does not mean an excess of estrogen. It means there is not enough progesterone. This condition is characterized by heavy bleeding that may include clots, unexplained weight gain, bloating, and an intestinal tract that feels like it is filled with concrete. Pre-menopausal women who are still producing an adequate amount of estrogen can often regain hormonal balance simply by buying a tube of progesterone cream at a health food store or online health retailer, and applying it as directed for the second 15 days of the monthly cycle. All the progesterone creams sold at such places are bioidentical.

Progesterone deficiency following pregnancy is the culprit during post-partum depression. Instead of taking a synthetic anti-depressant that would provide a host of unpleasant side effects and would appear in breast milk, progesterone cream can be safely used after giving birth until a feeling of normalcy returns.

Testosterone is the hormone of personality. It provides motivation, assertiveness, a sense of power and control, feelings of well being, and enhanced drive. With adequate testosterone women are able to take risks, act assertively and live their lives with zest. Without testosterone women exist as if in black and white. It is testosterone that brings them into full living color.

Testosterone conveys powerful anti-aging effects for women. It works with estrogen to keep skin supple, increase bone mineral density, boost mood, and increase the ability to handle stress. It turns fat into muscle and makes exercise workouts worthwhile. Low levels of testosterone are associated with heart attack, Alzheimer`s disease, osteoporosis, and depression. Testosterone improves looks, figure, energy, outlook, enjoyment of living, sex appeal and sexual fulfillment.

Females produce increased amounts of testosterone during puberty. Levels peak in their early twenties, and as they decline sex drive declines too. By the time she reaches menopause, a woman will have only about half of the testosterone she once had.

Women have a high estrogen to testosterone ratio. It is this ratio that keeps them looking and feeling good. Testosterone is produced in the ovaries and improves clitoral and nipple sensitivity, libido, and the ease and quality of orgasms. Loss of testosterone leads to fatigue, memory loss, abdominal fat, weight gain, panic attacks and lack of motivation.

It is testosterone along with progesterone that balances the effects of estrogen allowing women the full benefits of estrogen without the danger of breast cancer. It reduces inflammation, protects the heart, lowers LDL and raises HDL cholesterol, and normalizes blood glucose levels.

As with the other hormones, balance is the key when using testosterone. Signs of too much testosterone are facial hair, coarsening body hair, acne, and aggression. Testosterone can be converted to DHT resulting in hair loss on the head. This is remedied with the herb saw palmetto. Testosterone promotes muscle development. Without it, a woman can exercise all day and never gain muscle mass. This feature allows testosterone to support better functioning of two critical organs, the brain and heart. Without testosterone the brain loses the ability to function well and the heart loses its strength.

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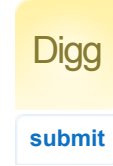
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