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REGULATE YOUR HORMONES NATURALLY

Maybe you don't know, but **many of our hormones can be regulated naturally** using good nutrition, physical activity, good sleep habits and positive lifestyle changes. Yes, without medications! Incredible? Wait until you reach the end of this article and you will be amazed at your body's ability to adapt to the good news you are about to receive! Let's start at the beginning.

After all, what are hormones and what are they for?

Hormones are the body's chemical messengers and are essential for regulating a wide range of bodily functions including growth, metabolism, reproduction and mood. That is, from your size to your weight, from your libido to your anger, **they rule everything**. Hormones are like conductors in the great opera that is our body. They are produced by the endocrine glands, travel through the bloodstream to reach target cells, bind to specific receptors and initiate various cellular responses. **Like musical instruments, nutrition and lifestyle contribute to this performance in every phase of hormonal activity**. And if your hormones are out of balance, your performance will be out of tune.

Recognizing how hormonal imbalances can affect health and how functional nutrition and behavioral changes can help restore balance is crucial to having a healthy, long-lasting body. What you eat and how you use your body influences the glands where hormones are produced and also their transport and activating mechanisms. Next, I will give you some examples of how this happens in hormones of the **thyroid, as well as estrogen, insulin and cortisol**.

Thyroid hormones

Balancing thyroid hormones using diet and lifestyle changes involves reducing inflammation, managing stress, and ensuring adequate intake of specific nutrients essential for thyroid health.

Consuming too many calories as well as prolonged fasting and consuming too few calories for long periods can **negatively impact thyroid hormone levels**. Eating processed foods high in sugar and refined flour, with their high glycemic loads, also impacts these hormones. On the other hand, adequate intake of nutrients such as selenium, iodine, zinc **and iron, in addition to adequate levels of vitamin D, benefit thyroid production and function**.

Regular exercise is another factor that can help regulate metabolism and **reduce stress**, which are both beneficial for thyroid health. This gland can even be greatly affected when our stress levels increase. In response to stress, high cortisol levels end up interfering with the production of TSH which is the thyroid-stimulating hormone. This way, activities that regulate cortisol levels also regulate the thyroid. Getting regular exercise and practicing relaxation techniques such as yoga, meditation, deep breathing exercises and mindfulness are all beneficial in this regard.

Quality sleep also helps a lot. Aim for 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night and maintain a consistent sleep schedule.

Lastly, avoid toxins and endocrine disruptors found in certain plastics, pesticides and personal care products as they interfere with thyroid function. Use natural or organic toiletries, avoid plastic food storage containers, and choose organic products whenever possible.

Estrogen

Did you know that even the time you eat your meals can impact your hormones? And that's not all: your diet, whether it's vegetarian, vegan, carnivore, Western, low carb or Mediterranean, the quantity and quality of food also influence hormonal balance.

Hormones are produced in glands which then release them into the bloodstream where they flow to their target organs. For example: the ovaries produce estrogen and progesterone which enter the bloodstream and regulate female reproductive functions in the uterus.

Estrogen dominance is a condition in which women have high levels of estradiol in their bodies. The **condition has been linked to a variety of health problems**, including insulin resistance, certain types of cancer, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), and cardiovascular disease. But a good diet can help you to avoid these clinical conditions.

Consuming large amounts of refined grains, tomatoes, cheese, sausage, meat, and, at the same time, only small amounts of nuts and seeds, cruciferous and other vegetables, fish, shellfish, yogurt, and coffee appears to increase the risk of postmenopausal breast cancer. This might happen through the diet's influence on estrogen metabolism. A Western eating habit rich in eggs and meat appears to increase estradiol levels in the body and increase the risk for some types of breast cancer.

Insulin

Insulin is a hormone naturally present in the pancreas and is **essential as it allows your body to use sugar** (glucose) for energy. If your pancreas doesn't produce enough insulin or your body doesn't use insulin properly, your blood sugar levels rise (hyperglycemia), ultimately resulting in **diabetes**. But before that happens, high insulin levels can cause **other problems such as polycystic ovary syndrome, obesity, accelerated aging and hepatic steatosis**. There's not much else to say about that, right? Taking care of your insulin levels is very, very important for your health.

Intermittent fasting involves cycles of eating and fasting, and can lead to reduced calorie intake and improved metabolism and insulin action. Maintaining adequate bodyweight and exercising regularly help with this quite a bit. Otherwise, excess visceral fat can accumulate which is strongly linked to insulin resistance as it releases free fatty acids and inflammatory markers that interfere with insulin regulation. To help avoid this, chromium, selenium, zinc, iron and magnesium are important minerals for regulating carbohydrate metabolism and insulin sensitivity. As well as

antioxidants such as vitamin C and E, and selenium, these reduce oxidative stress and help regulate this important hormone.

Cortisol

Balancing cortisol through diet involves a broad approach that includes **stabilizing blood sugar levels, reducing inflammation**, supporting adrenal health, **limiting stimulants such as coffee and alcohol, staying hydrated**, consuming healthy fats and proteins, and practicing mindful eating. By incorporating these dietary strategies, you can help regulate cortisol production, reduce stress, and promote overall hormonal balance.

Stress can cause dehydration and vice versa. All of our organs, including the brain, need water to function properly. If you're dehydrated, your body won't work well – and that can cause stress. You can help regulate cortisol by hydrating properly, especially on hot days and when you exercise.

Although cortisol itself stimulates the appetite, **extremes in calorie consumption, whether from overeating or prolonged fasting, affect the cortisol levels**. Certain isolated nutrients work to control cortisol levels, including: omega 3, complex B vitamins, vitamin C and zinc.

In short

There are 4 general pillars of hormonal health and they are all improved by positive lifestyle changes: stress control, regular physical activity, sleep hygiene and good nutritional habits. Begin your change for the better now and you will see the impact on your hormones in no time. A healthier life awaits you and you just need to take the first step to eventually get there.

Until next time, live well, live less medicated, and with well-regulated hormones!

Isabel.