



PRIMAL BEAUTY

HORMONE
HANDBOOK

by Kelsey Ale

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About Kelsey Ale

My name is Kelsey Ale (of KelseyAle.com) and I'm a **Certified Nutritional Therapist** living in Santa Monica, California.

In 2011, after suffering from undiagnosable discomfort for over 5 years, I realized that I needed to make key changes to my diet if I wanted to live an enjoyable life. Upon transitioning to the Paleo diet and cutting out gluten, grains, and adding in quality fats and protein I immediately began feeling alive in my body in a way I hadn't felt in years, and my health issues began disappearing one by one.

I teamed up with PaleoHacks.com to create Primal Beauty because I've found that most of the people taking an active role in changing their health and transforming their bodies are women. But in my opinion, women aren't given enough guidance on how to take care of their special health needs (and we do have special needs, as I've learned personally over and over again.)

I wanted to help get that information to you, so here in the program I put everything together to make sure you are taken care of in your health and weight loss journey. I really hope the gems in here help you start feeling better and getting the body you want – starting right now.

Before setting up shop at KelseyAle.com I was a certified massage therapist and Pilates instructor for over 10 years. During this time I pursued my passion for nutrition and delicious, healthy eating on the side, by counseling friends, family, and clients on healthy meal plans, workouts, self-care routines, and dietary supplements.

I know that health and beauty are interrelated, and I believe that a well-rounded holistic approach is the best way to achieve long lasting results. I love seeing the way people light up when they begin to feel empowered and in control of their health and their body.

I've dealt with parasites, Candida, chronic bacterial infections, leaky gut, fatigue, acne, and terrible digestive problems, among other things. I know what it's like to be uncomfortable, and my mission is to use my personal experience and my education to help you get out of discomfort quickly and live a life you love.

This program – Primal Beauty – is just that. It's me providing all the information from my brain (and the experts I've worked with over the years) trying to get you the most useful, practical information so that you can indeed lose that extra fat and be a healthier, more vibrant version of yourself.

If you have any questions about the program or anything at all, please email me at Kelsey@kelseyale.com - I'd love to hear from you!

However, please do not send tech support or product support questions to that address – please send them directly to the customer service team at PaleoHacks – that email address for that is support@paleohacks.com

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Hello Beautiful,

Let's talk about your hormones.

To be even more specific, let's talk about how your hormones work...what they do...how they affect your health and beauty...and what changes you can make to your diet and lifestyle that will get them working the way nature intended.

Sound good?

Of course it does.

In this guide, I'm going to get into the nitty-gritty about the different hormones and what role they play in certain issues you may be facing. I don't care how old you are—no woman should be oily, dry, or saggy/baggy if you don't have to be!

So let's begin...

Your Hormones (At a Glance)

Your body has hormones operating from many different places.

Cortisol is made in our adrenals (the little glands above our kidneys), melatonin and oxytocin come from our brains; thyroxine (T4) and triiodothyronine (T3) both come from our thyroid; estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone are produced by our ovaries; leptin is created by our fat cells, ghrelin is created in our digestive tract, and serotonin comes from our brain. They all work together in a delicate balance, from infancy all the way until you're wrinkly and knitting sweaters in a rocking chair.

When we eat poorly, and don't take care of our bodies, our health starts to decline. Our bodies work hard to adjust, but if bad habits continue, eventually problems arise. Hormones play a large role in this process—they are an important factor in our health and happiness.

It's important to keep in mind that even as your body begins to heal itself, things are going to start to feel different - and it may be slightly uncomfortable while you're getting used to it. It can be really helpful to keep a journal about your experiments and experiences as you go along - note how your body reacts to food, rest, activities, relaxation, and supplements as you begin to make changes.

There are also some great online programs and apps that can help. Fertility Friend is one that I've used in the past and like. It has an app that can help you keep track of different dates and symptoms as you go along.

Also, consider keeping a special journal for your hormone experimentation if it makes you more comfortable. The important thing is to begin notating how your body reacts to food, rest, activities, relaxation, and supplements as you make changes.

Hormones And What They Do

(Plus Hormone Management Tips)

Cortisol

Cortisol is the “stress hormone”. Whenever you’re in danger, or put under physical or emotional pressure, your body’s adrenal glands respond by shooting cortisol into your bloodstream. Your body is then fed extra oxygen and your heartbeat quickens. Energy is unleashed from your fat and glucose stores.

This is a positive reaction to help deal with the stress trigger, but too much stress over time can break the cycle and cause imbalances, leaving you exhausted and with a number of health problems. It can affect learning, memory, blood pressure, immune function, weight, and many other symptoms and diseases.

Kelsey’s tip: Make sure you exercise regularly! Exercise can be a great stress reliever when done the right way for your body – for example, limit your workouts to less than 40 minutes at a time, since beyond that our bodies can begin to get stressed.

Otherwise, you’re just causing more stress.

Stress relievers like yoga, meditation, reading, massage, your favorite hobbies, having sex, and many other similar activities can also help to get cortisol back in a normal range.

Melatonin

At sunset, our brains’ pineal glands secrete melatonin. This sleep hormone peaks in the very early a.m. hours as complete darkness is what makes it work, and real or artificial lights cut off production. Melatonin not only puts us to sleep, but it helps offset stress and is a free radical-busting antioxidant. It’s such an important hormone that low amounts can be linked to many health problems such as being overweight, diabetes, and even cancer.

Kelsey’s management tip: Banish light-emitting electronics from your bedroom. (And no late night Netflix binges!) Your bedroom should be in complete darkness, or as close to dark as you can get. If you need to wear an eye mask—do it.

Even light from a nearby streetlight can disrupt our melatonin production. The more hours you can get and the earlier you can get into bed, the better off you’ll be.

Too-tight clothing is also a melatonin suppressor, up to 60% in some studies. So sleeping in the nude or in comfortable clothing may actually benefit your health. (Your significant other will also get a kick out of this.) If you’re looking for food ideas, cherries are melatonin-rich and can be eaten before bedtime to help.

Oxytocin

Oxytocin is often called the "love hormone". It's released during touch, sex, orgasms, and is a huge factor in the bonding of newborn babies with their mothers. Breastfeeding also releases a huge amount and many new mothers report feeling euphoric and even falling into a peaceful sleep afterwards.

It's a hormone that bonds people. High levels increase our health by helping out our sex drive, heightening our trust, assisting with back pain, and it can even lower blood pressure. It assists with depression, fear of strangers, trust, stress relief, and even helps make us more generous. (Whenever you feel like tipping extra at your favorite restaurant, this hormone is to blame.)

Oxytocin can create a "memory loss" effect, which can be helpful with childbirth, pain, and even fights with spouses or loved ones. Estrogen helps oxytocin's effects, which might explain why women seem more natural at bonding than their furrier counterparts.

This also explains why women tend to bond more intensely after heavy make-out sessions and sex-induced orgasms. Even simple things like playing with babies and children, or a touch from that special someone can amp up release of this hormone — that's how powerful oxytocin is!

Kelsey's management tip: I don't like to think about "managing" oxytocin because it's such a fun and beneficial hormone to experience. Screw management—let's get as much of this as possible!

Cuddling with your children, spouses, or even pets can trigger a flood of pleasurable oxytocin. Even the act of thinking about loved ones can heighten levels. Stressed out? Start fantasizing about your lover or spouse and watch that stress melt away.

A healthy sex life is also a great way to lift levels. That lunchtime booty-call may be just what the doctor ordered! ;)

Thyroxine (T4) and Triiodothyronine (T3)

Your thyroid gland's hormones are your body's natural, built-in thermostat. It takes iodine and converts it into thyroid hormones. Your thyroid helps regulate your metabolism and energy levels, and it keeps your hair, nails, and skin looking lustrous and beautiful.

The quality of your nutrition, your stress levels, and your body's inflammation all play a role in your thyroid's health. If these get thrown out of whack, it can leave you feeling fatigued, depressed, constipated, dry all over, and constantly cold.

The thyroid hormones are important for proper development of all cells in the human

body. For example: they also regulate protein, fat, and carbohydrate metabolism, helping how our cells use energy.

Kelsey's management tip: Make sure you're eating whole, real foods only. Stay away from too much sugar, and figure out any food sensitivities you have (read the *Primal Beauty* book for more on that). Thyroid health surprisingly often starts in the gut, so your diet is key here.

If you think you suffer from thyroid issues, the first thing to do is to get the gluten and all other grains out of your diet. I can almost guarantee you'll start feeling better very quickly.

Also, a number of physical and outside stimulants influence how our thyroid functions. Environmental plastics, including hidden BPA, can disrupt your thyroid. Heavy metals are also a contributor, including mercury. Stay away.

Estrogen and Progesterone

This pair of hormones works together in a delicate cyclic balance to keep your reproductive system working. They rise and fall throughout the menstrual cycle to signal each phase to begin or end. They ensure proper development of our bodies and promote healthy fertility, but unfortunately poor health can compromise this partnership.

Weight gain, chronic stress, and exposure to toxic chemicals can all factor into the balance of these hormones. When your levels are messed up it can cause irritability, depression, migraines, extreme PMS symptoms, weight issues, infertility, and many other reproductive disorders.

Kelsey's management tip: Eat an organic, whole food diet and maintain a healthy level of fitness to keep it all working properly. Also, cut out processed junk and eat more vegetables and fruit. It is common in sufferers of Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) to have insulin resistance, which means you need to get your carbohydrate intake in check.

All of these hormones are strongly affected by your diet, and we'll talk all about that later in this guide.

Testosterone

It's true: you have testosterone—this hormone is not just for dudes. Though men have ten to fifteen times more testosterone than women do, it's still vital for all of us. It has the same effect in both genders: it pumps up your sexual desire, your muscle strength, bone density, and metabolism. If you don't have enough it can leave

you feeling sluggish, depressed, and disinterested (in both life and sex). On the other hand, too much and it can be a factor in painful acne, unwanted facial hair, and other problems like an abnormally large clitoris.

Kelsey's management tip: Unless you're on steroids or suffering from some female hormone conditions—like Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome—you're more likely to have too little testosterone than too much of it.

Some women may benefit from very small amounts of testosterone therapy, but the side effects of excess testosterone can be worse than the reasons you might want to try hormone replacement therapy in the first place. These include male pattern hair loss, acne, male pattern hair growth (such as facial hair), changes in menstrual cycles, clitoromegaly (that abnormally enlarged clitoris I mentioned), and a deepening of one's voice. Some of these changes, such as clitoromegaly and a deeper voice, could be permanent.

Make sure to test your testosterone levels and consult your doctor on hormone maintenance. This isn't one to mess around with on your own, but know that you can definitely balance your testosterone/estrogen levels naturally with diet and lifestyle. We'll get more into that later.

Leptin and Ghrelin

Leptin and ghrelin, your hunger hormones, are on a seesaw. They're constantly working to tell you when you're hungry and when to back away from the food. Ghrelin is produced in the digestive tract and tells your body when your stomach is empty. It is the fast acting hormone, preparing the body to crave meals.

Leptin is secreted by your body's fat cells and triggers appetite-suppressing hormones when your body should be done eating. It is a slow reacting hormone.

Sugar and certain types of carbohydrates—which can impede leptin production—can mess up the balance between the two hormones. This makes ghrelin send out hunger signals when they're not needed. When you eat those sugary foods, or tons of grains, you can become "leptin-resistant", which is when your cell receptors don't want to listen to leptin's messages to stop eating. Then the body's signals of hunger get confused and can crave the wrong sources of food energy, and we can end up eating way too much.

Kelsey's management tip: Refined sugar - and grains for many people - need to go in order to keep leptin in balance. Eating too frequently, usually caused by a lack of fat and protein, can also cause leptin issues, as well as a lack of sleep in dark environments.

Serotonin

Serotonin's job is mood and memory. It's not completely responsible for those things, but it plays a big part.

About 90% of it is produced in the gut and it's often called the "feel-good hormone" since it increases feelings of well-being. It also helps control the body's ability to multitask.

If your levels are messed up, it can lead to obsessive behavior and depression. Do you notice an increase in anxiety recently? This is a sign of serotonin imbalance. Serotonin is believed to help influence moods, social behavior, sleep, memory, sexual desire, appetite, and digestion.

Kelsey's management tip: If you suffer from depression or intense anxiety, you don't have to go the pharmaceutical route. Cleaning up your diet (getting the sugar out and figuring out food sensitivities) can turn your emotional life around. Trust me – I've experienced it myself! I used to get depressed and aggravated every time I ate refined sugar, and when I took it out of my diet for good things finally changed.

As far as other natural remedies go, since tryptophan is converted into 5-hydroxytryptophan (5-HTP), which is subsequently converted into serotonin, scientific studies have proposed that consumption of tryptophan-rich foods or 5-HTP supplements may increase the level of serotonin in the brain. You can find both tryptophan and 5-HTP supplements in any natural foods store, or online.

I've used 5-HTP and SAM-e - another precursor to serotonin - to help stabilize my mood at certain times over the years. I was on several anti-depressant drugs in my teens, including Paxil and Zoloft. I experienced a lot of side effects, and had a hard time getting off of them. I decided I would never go that route again if I could help it. 5-HTP and SAM-e can be just as effective and they have no side effects. Plus, you can get them pretty much anywhere that sells supplements.

If you find that 5HTP makes you drowsy or doesn't work the way you want it to after several days of trying it, you can also try the supplement L-Tryptophan. This amino acid is what the body makes 5HTP out of, and it may just be that your body needs that instead

How To Test & Monitor Your Hormones (Like a Boss)

If you suspect your hormones are imbalanced, look in the mirror and check for a muffin top—you could be right. Many times if you've been feeling off and things in (and on) your body are slowly losing function, it can be a sign that something has gone awry.

Here's how to figure out problems and get them under control:

Blood Panels

Doctors love blood tests, and fortunately they can tell us a lot about our hormones and what kind of shape they're in.

Find a good, holistic naturopath or Functional Medicine Doctor on PrimalDocs.com and ask them to run:

Thyroid Panels

You'll need more than just the standard ones. Request TSH, free T3, free T4, and reverse T3 plus thyroid antibodies (to test for autoimmune thyroiditis, aka Hashimoto's). A conventional doc's only course of action for anything out of whack with those will be to put you on thyroid medication for the rest of your life.

That's why I strongly suggest seeing a naturopath or a functional medicine doc, because they'll give you dietary suggestions (the same ones I'll be giving you here), and nutritional supplements and herbs to help the problem.

Adrenals

Have them measure cortisol first thing in the morning, free and total testosterone, and DHEA. Progesterone should be ordered on day 21–23 (in cycling women), fasting insulin and glucose, IGF-1 (growth hormone), and glucose.

Make sure that the progesterone and estrogens are ordered and don't settle for the FSH and LH tests. This is what the majority of doctors will want to run and they are of little value for comparing hormone balance. Again, this is why you want to find a functional medicine doc or a naturopath because they will order these tests and then some, and know what to do with the results.

Ordering Your Own Tests

If you can't get your doctor to order the right tests—let's face it, some aren't as receptive as others—there are ways to get the tests yourself. I personally wouldn't want to go to a doctor that wouldn't respect my wishes but some times the circumstances prevent us from finding a better one. (You can order one yourself at www.canaryclub.org or www.mymedlab.com)

The Omega-6/Omega-3 ratio, is another test I recommend. It costs about \$150 and is offered from Metagenics. This test is especially beneficial if you are carrying a few extra pounds and can't seem to lose it even with after reading Primal Beauty or using the suggestions in this guide.

If you're experiencing symptoms of ADD and perimenopause (the time before or after menopause)—this is also the test for you. Most women don't optimize their Omega-3 intake and it's one of the most proven supplements on the market. You can get this test as part of the NutraEval test listed below.

NutraEval

NutraEval FMV can tell you where all your nutritional deficiencies are. The cost is reasonable for people with insurance who qualify for Genova's Pay Assured program at \$169. You can even add on Vitamin D for \$5.

Mercury

If you are suffering from fatigue, weight gain, hair loss, a sluggish sex drive, and underperforming thyroid, you may have mercury toxicity. You can get tested from www.mercout.com

Telomeres

If you are interested in quantifying biologic age, the best marker for it is your telomeres. They are the caps on your chromosomes that keep them from unraveling. www.spectracell.com is the place to do it.

Neuroendocrine Panel

Women in perimenopause have more stress and irritability, a diminished libido, and lack of focus. A Neuroendocrine 3 panel (9505) from <http://www.neurorelief.com> looks at the intersection of your hormones with your neurotransmitters. It generates a personalized amino-acid balancing protocol. If you're trying to get off medications like

antidepressants, sleeping pills, or anxiety medication, this is a great test for you.

Pathway Fit

The Pathway Fit test looks into your own personal genetic code. It will analyze your metabolism, eating habits, and the way your body responds to exercise. Once you fill out your lifestyle questionnaire, it will tell you how to optimize your diet and workouts to lead you to a lifestyle of strong metabolism. This is a great way to make this plan work even better for you. <http://www.pathway.com/>

Genova's Menopause Plus

Genova Diagnostics Menopause Plus test will tell you your melatonin and cortisol levels, as well as your estrogen and progesterone. It tells you the levels over three days, which is more accurate than the standard testing. <http://www.gdx.net/>

How do you decide what to get and where do you go from here?

These are all tools to help improve your health in conjunction with the suggestions in this guide. Once you get your results, you will be empowered to better serve your body. Use these tests as another tool to help guide you along the road to amazing health and a wonderful life.

(A note about reading the results: Many doctors rely on the "normal" range readings, which aren't always directly correlated to your optimal health. When you're having problems with hormonal symptoms, the last thing you need is to be dealing with things in a normal range when there could still be problems. Normal range can tell you if you are in dire health, but they don't always give you a good indicator of whether you are in optimal range. This is another reason to go to a functional medicine practitioner or a naturopath, as they are trained to look for optimal ranges. Many times these numbers can indicate future problems that are starting to go astray.)

Like Abs: Proper Hormone Function Starts In The Kitchen

A big reason why I decided to write this book is because I want to empower you to take control of your health.

So many of our health “problems” begin with what we do with our bodies.

And when things go wrong, we tend to seek external help...and the doctors and experts we turn to give us external remedies – many of which are unnatural

For example, if tomorrow you visit your doctor complaining of hypothyroidism, he'll most likely send you to the pharmacy for some Levoxyl—and a couple weeks later your hair may fall out.

But you don't have to go the common route. (You are not common.)

There are ways that you can control (and prevent) many hormone problems simply by following a premium diet and lifestyle.

In this next section, I'll give you some general health tips, tricks, and techniques to having well-functioning hormones. Afterwards, we'll get into more detail about how to manage very common hormone problems.

Here are some of my top tips and why they can be beneficial.

Avoid Refined Foods Like the Plague

Sugar, white bread, alcohol, white flour products (muffins, pastries, bagels, pasta, pretzels, etc.), wheat products, and other grains are otherwise known as The Devil — they offer you nothing, and take quite a bit away.

Sugar causes the body to secrete insulin and insulin is the master hormone in the body. When your insulin levels go too high it throws off all the other hormones in the body.

Also eliminate xenoestrogens from your daily life because they imitate estrogen in the body, and we don't need to be throwing off estrogen levels anymore than we already do. Xenoestrogens can be found in pesticides, plastics, sunscreens, as well as industrial compounds like BPA and Phthalates. The best way to eliminate them is by eating fresh organic foods and avoiding animal products. Also, cut out the use of canned foods, plastic bottled water, and whatever you do, DO NOT MICROWAVE YOUR

FOOD IN PLASTIC. In fact, avoid microwaves altogether if you can - instead, heat or reheat things in the oven, toaster oven, or on the stove

Ramp Up Your Omega-3s, Please

One of the easiest ways to balance your hormones is to include more polyunsaturated Omega-3 fats in your diet. Omega 3s fight inflammation, which can be caused by the consumption of too many Omega-6 fatty acids. Organic, pastured meats, pasture-raised eggs, and wild-caught fish are the best way to get your Omega-3s. That, and supplementing with a good fish oil.

For fat and oil options, stick to grass-fed ghee (clarified butter), coconut oil, bacon fat, and olive oil (unheated) since they contain little to no Omega-6s. Steer clear of commercial oils like vegetable, corn, peanut, canola, soybean, margarine, shortening, or chemically altered fats, since they contain a TON of Omega-6s. .

Limit Your Caffeine Intake to 0%

I know that I won't be the most popular gal on the block when I say this...

But coffee and caffeine in general ain't so great for ya. Excessive caffeine can raise cortisol and slow down your thyroid.

Not only that, but too much caffeine can wreak havoc on your endocrine (hormonal) system because it makes our bodies think we're constantly in danger by spewing out adrenaline and cortisol. It can affect your sleep, your mood, your appetite, cravings for sugar, and so much more. I always suggest that people at least give themselves an opportunity to find out if caffeine affects you negatively by taking it out of your life for a month and seeing how you feel. I've seen results nothing short of miraculous when people do this.

Cut down your coffee at the least...but your hormones will give you gold stars and a pat on the back if you cut it out completely!

Get Fat

No, I'm not trying to ruin your summer. I'm talking about getting a lot of fat into your diet.

You know, like coconut oil (my favorite) and avocados. Plus the fat you find on pasture-raised, grass-fed meats. These are important for your diet along with other sources of saturated fat.

It's the best way to boost female hormones. Cholesterol is needed for formation of healthy cell membranes and is a precursor for all steroid hormones (progesterone,

FSH, estrogen, etc.). Proper hormonal balance requires lots of saturated fats. All that nonsense we've been told for the last 60 years about saturated fat and cholesterol being the devil's work is pretty much all wrong, and new research has confirmed that. It doesn't make sense that nature would give us these amazing foods and we should just NOT eat them. In fact, we NEED them! And clearly that whole low-fat fad has not been working...

So get some!

Put Some Pep-tin In Your Leptin

Leptin is a hormone that regulates hunger and metabolism.

If you create a deficiency by consuming too much sugar or processed foods, or by skipping sleep and snacking often, you'll get more food cravings and a lower metabolism.

So eat real food, stay away from sugar, and get more regular sleep.

Vitamin D is Key

Vitamin D acts like a hormone for our body. Deficiency has been linked to all kinds of health problems like allergies, asthma, fatigue, weight gain, food allergies, cancer, and many others.

The sun is the best way to get it, but sometimes it's not enough, especially if you wear sunscreen all the time. If you do wear sunscreen, know that studies are now showing that a lack of sun exposure can cause certain types of cancer, and those nasty chemicals in most sunscreens can cause cancer and other things, too. So wear a lower SPF sunscreen (depending on how long you're going to be in the sun and your skin type) and use a natural sunscreen without the parabens and toxins.

You can have your levels of Vitamin D tested and take Vitamin D supplements if necessary.

Up Your Fiber!

The fiber in raw fruits and veggies binds itself to estrogen and help clear it out of your system. With women suffering from estrogen dominance, this is very helpful. (More on this later.)

...

Phytonutrients

I like to call these "fighter nutrients".

Why?

They "fight" against estrogen dominance.

Raw green veggies like asparagus and broccoli are especially rich in diindolylmethane (DIM), which assists the healthy metabolism of estrogen, mopping up excess estrogens and helping to metabolize them into a form that has little activity.

These fighter nutrients also help DNA repair and this is associated with lower risk for certain cancers and positive effects on a wide variety of hormonal health problems.

All the cruciferous vegetables—including kale, cabbage, cauliflower and Brussels sprouts—are good sources and help to protect against estrogen dominance. (A condition we'll discuss at length later in this book.)

Get Down With Your Inner Superhero

Maca Root is known as a "superfood".

It has a history of boosting hormone production and libido. It helps reduce PMS, increase fertility, and create healthy skin. Maca is high in minerals and essential fatty acids.

Add some of this to a post-workout shake and you'll be feeling super in no time.

Run...fast!

There are several programs out there but the general idea is to warm up with a slow pace for a few minutes and then sprint at full capacity for 30 seconds or so. Then you decrease again for a couple minutes and sprint again, working up to eight times. This is highly effective at getting fit and blasting hormone problems.

Rid Your Life—and Bathroom—of Hormone Disruptors

Parabens, Phthalates, and Bisphenol-A (BPA) are all endocrine disruptors and many are in your shower or bathroom cabinet. Consider switching to more natural versions or even making your own. (See Primal Beauty for more on this.)

Chlorine can also disrupt thyroid function, so if your shower water is chlorinated, get a simple water filter for your shower head. You don't want to be breathing that stuff in or letting it permeate your skin!

Get Un-Stressed

Unnecessary stress may lead to 97% of your hormone issues. (This is not a real number but I need to stress that it's important!)

Even if everything else is right, stress can disrupt our hormones. Make relaxation a key part of your life.

Avoid Synthetic Hormones

Hormone-based birth control and other synthetic hormones disrupt the delicate balance of your natural ones. Consider a program like in the book *Taking Charge of Your Fertility*, or try replacing hormone-based birth control with barrier methods.

Try Vitex

Vitex is known to help many women with hormonal irregularities. If you are suffering from irregular periods, PMS symptoms, or even menopause it could help to improve your symptoms and get your body back on track.

What To Eat And What To Avoid

If you want to get your hormones in shape, the first place to start is with what you put into your body.

You've heard that saying, "Garbage in, garbage out"?

Well it's wrong.

Garbage in = garbage body. It stays in and messes you up!

If you fill your body with garbage, your hormones won't be able to function the way they should. Here's what to eat to make sure that they are working like they should:

What to Eat

Clean Protein

- Organic pasture raised chicken, turkey, beef, bison, venison, or any other naturally raised or wild-caught animal
- Pasture-raised eggs
- Wild-caught fish
- Seeds
- Soaked or sprouted nuts

Healthy Fats

- Coconut oil: contains lauric acid which is beneficial for hormone production and healing skin. It's also anti-microbial and kills bacteria and viruses, is a good source of energy, easy to digest, and improves metabolism.
- Fish high in Omega-3's
- Raw butter/ghee or pastured butter- rich source of fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K-2. It provides great amounts of short and medium chain fatty acids, boost metabolism, and fight against bad bacteria. They also are important for hormone building production. If you can't tolerate dairy, don't eat these, though.
- Avocados- rich in healthy mono-unsaturated fats, full of fiber, potassium, magnesium, vitamin E, B-vitamins, and folic acid.
- Egg yolks- rich in countless vitamins and minerals. A, D, E, B2, B6, B9, iron, calcium, potassium, choline, and phosphorous. They contain almost half the protein in eggs, too. They can help with thyroid balance, healthy skin, and healthy hormones.
- Unheated or lightly heated extra virgin olive oil.

Antioxidant-rich Veggies

- Dark greens like asparagus, broccoli, spinach, collard greens, cabbage, cucumbers, kale, and cilantro
- Brightly colored vegetables. Green, yellow, red, and orange bell peppers, red cabbage, tomatoes, carrots, red and white onions
- Starchy vegetable like sweet potatoes, spaghetti squash, beets, yucca, artichokes, turnips, and butternut squash

Healing Spices and Herbs

- Ginger: improves absorption of nutrients and helps regulate the thyroid
- Garlic: an all around excellent source of vitamins and minerals and very good for the body
- Cumin: rich source of antioxidants. Sometimes shown to improve insulin sensitivity
- Cayenne- antibacterial and great for detoxing
- Cinnamon- helps reduce and regulate blood sugar
- Turmeric- helps improve liver function. Strong antioxidant.

What to Avoid

Avoid High Omega-6 Polyunsaturated Fats

- Vegetable Oil
- Corn oil or Mazola oil
- Peanut Oil
- Canola Oil
- Soybean Oil
- Shortening
- Margarine

Avoid Caffeine

Like I said before, coffee can mess around with your endocrine system, especially if your body is already hormonally taxed. Try replacing it with non-caffeinated herbal teas.

Avoid Processed Foods

Stay away from anything prepared or packaged. This includes canned foods. If the packaged foods are organic and don't include chemicals, grains, or sugar, you can use them very sparingly.

Absolutely no high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS), hydrogenated oils, or MSG.

Avoid Alcohol

I may be beginning to sound like the Fun Police, but alcohol use has been linked with elevated testosterone, lowered progesterone, rise in estrogen, and a decreased rate in oxidation of estradiol in premenopausal and postmenopausal women.

It also takes energy on your liver's part to detox it out of your system. You want your liver to focus on its everyday tasks at hand like metabolizing hormones properly – not helping you recover from a hangover.

I'm not saying don't ever drink. I certainly drink sometimes – maybe once a week or so. Otherwise I just feel tired and a little down. As with everything else, just cut out the alcohol for a few weeks or a month and see if you feel any different, either mentally or physically. Then decide how often you want to drink.

Avoid Sugar

Sugar spikes our blood sugar and insulin levels really high, really quickly. After which, they dramatically drop.

When this happens, our adrenals attempt to return things to normal by releasing adrenaline and cortisol. Eventually, this leads to even more problems with our hormones. This doesn't even touch on the fact that it causes problems such as inflammation, depletes vitamin and mineral stores, affects insulin resistance, affects PMS, and many other problems.

Stay away.

Avoid Dairy

Our dairy farming practices can lead to a triple increase in estrogens, especially because we milk cows year round and inject them with hormones. (In many other countries, the hormone ratio is much better because of safer farming practices and the fact that cows are milked for only five months of the year.)

The high temperature cooking (pasteurization) is also troublesome and voids many of the possible health benefits of dairy. It strips the dairy of the lactase we need to digest it, as well as nutrients in the milk. There are some people that are fine with dairy and can tolerate small amounts, but there are some people who shouldn't be eating dairy at all. To find out if you're sensitive or intolerant to dairy, take it out of your diet for a week or two, then eat a lot of it at once and see how you feel for the next few days from head to toe. Dairy can affect every part of your body – not just excessive farting ;).

If you find that you can tolerate dairy, you should make it whole fat (the nutrients are stored in the fat) and from pastured cows (the toxins from conventional cows' diets are also stored in the fat) and preferably raw (unpasteurized). At the very least it

should be organic with no added hormones given to the cows.

Everyone is obviously different, but when I eat dairy of any kind I break out, and sometimes even start spotting between periods. After doing some research I believe it's because it affects my estrogen levels, throwing my whole hormonal balance out of whack.

My advice is ultimately to just avoid it completely—you'll be safer that way.

Avoid Gluten

Gluten intolerance, gluten sensitivity, and Celiac disease have gotten a lot of press lately.

The rise in awareness about gluten is causing many people to discover that it's a huge trigger of many of their own health problems. People that are gluten sensitive—meaning that their immune system and often their digestive system is affected by gluten--tend to have a rise in adrenal hormone imbalances, issues with progesterone and estrogen, and infertility in general. It also can cause skin issues, headaches, weight gain, acne, muscle and joint pain, and contribute greatly to autoimmune symptoms of all kinds.

Hormone health affects all parts of your body, and gluten can unfortunately throw a lot of our hormones out of balance. Staying away from it can help many women.

Avoid Food Dyes

Food dyes can be made by what are known as "environmental estrogens". Many hormonal problems are linked with excess estrogen, so that alone is a good reason to stay away from them.

AVOID Grains

Grains have a similar effect on hormones as sugar does. It causes an insulin spike and then a quick drop, which makes cortisol and adrenaline kick in. All of these things affect the delicate balance that our hormones are trying to maintain, and can just compound problems if you're already having them.

Also, even gluten-free grains like rice, quinoa, and millet can act very much like gluten grains in our bodies, causing reactions of all kinds in our immune and hormonal systems.

Despite the fact that we've been told that whole grains and gluten-free grains are good for us, they have compounds in them that are very hard to digest for most people, and they cause a lot of issues for a lot of women (and men and kids) out there.

Give yourself the opportunity to find out if grains are affecting you by taking them out of your diet for 3 to 4 weeks. You may find that you're less lethargic, you start noticing more lean muscle appearing, and maybe your headaches go away. Or a myriad of other possibilities! After 3 to 4 weeks without gluten-free grains, eat a large serving of something like brown rice or quinoa and see how you feel for the next few days.

Avoid Soy and Other Legumes

Soy and other beans contain phytoestrogens. Phytoestrogens bind to regular estrogen receptors in our body, but not perfectly. They are an inferior source of estrogen and many times can increase our overall estrogen stores and throw things way off balance. That's why our diets need to be limited of phytoestrogens and soy has a high concentration, with the least amount of hormone-balancing offset

On Supplements

Supplements for Everyone

- Multivitamin
- Probiotics
- High-quality fish oil like fermented cod liver oil
- Vitamin D3

Hormone Support

- Cinnamon: helps reduce appetite, maintain blood sugar levels, and assist with sugar cravings
- Chromium Picolinate: can reduce carbohydrate cravings, alleviate depression, and help insulin resistance
- Vitamin B complex: can help reduce symptoms of depression and increase energy. Women with PCOS and women on the pill have been known to be deficient
- Biotin: contains eight essential vitamins and can reduce hair loss and help lower blood sugar
- Vitex: helps regulate women's hormones and their cycles nositol: can help with blood sugar, healthy follicle development, and even anxiety. It has promising studies with women with PCOS especially
- Saw Palmetto: can be used for controlling excessive hair growth but can't be used during pregnancy
- Red Raspberry leaf tea: helps tone uterus and balance hormones, and may help regulate periods
- Milk Thistle: helps support healthy liver function for healthy hormone detox
- Dong Quai: can help regulate hormones
- Maca: works to balance estrogen and progesterone in the body. It's an adaptogen and doesn't contain any hormones
- Tribulus: may normalize ovulation in infertile women prior to ovulation
- White Peony and Licorice Root: when used together, it helps for relaxing muscles and reducing painful menstruation, as well as lowering free testosterone and lowering serum
- Natural progesterone cream: used vaginally you can mimic the body's natural cycle. It should be as natural as possible and only used after ovulation until your period, or 14 days later (Get help from your physician with this.)
- Licorice Root: helps maintain hormone production and release
- Gymnema: helps reduce sugar cravings and lower high blood sugar. Can also aid in lowering lipids

As with all supplementation, it's best to consult an herbalist or naturopath before beginning a serious regimen. If you are pregnant or nursing, many of the above supplements *could be* unsafe.

Everything You Need To Know About Perimenopause

What is Perimenopause?

Perimenopause means "around menopause" and refers to the period before and after menopause, when a woman's body makes the change toward permanent infertility. It is also sometimes referred to as 'menopausal transition'.

The age at which perimenopause occurs is different for all women. Some never notice the signs, but for many others the effects can be a major nuisance.

The changes can begin as early as mid-thirties, but for most women it's sometime in their forties. The process on average takes about four years but for some that time can be much less or much more.

Everyone is different.

The signs can include menstrual irregularity (lengthening or shortening), anovulatory cycles (not releasing eggs), hot flashes, mood swings, sleep problems, and vaginal dryness.

The rule of thumb is that once you have gone through twelve consecutive months without a cycle, you are officially menopausal. An exception to that would be some women with other hormonal challenges, such as PCOS or exercise-induced amenorrhea, can be anovulatory in a similar way.

What are the symptoms?

You Haven't Had a Period Since Last Christmas

Once ovulation becomes less predictable, the length of time between periods can change. They may become longer or shorter, and your flow could change from lighter to heavier. You could start to have months where your period doesn't ever come.

On the other hand, some women even report that they have months where their flow is so heavy they can barely leave the house. In these cases anemia can sometimes become a problem, so it's important to monitor things closely. If you have a seven-day change or more in the length of your cycle, you could be in perimenopause. Or if the spacing is more than sixty days, you could also be in perimenopause. Of course, this can also be a sign of other hormonal disorders like PCOS (polycystic ovarian syndrome).

You Feel Like You're In Hell...All the Time

Hot flashes are a common symptom and women in perimenopause experience it too. The intensity, length, and frequency can vary. This can be a huge irritant and feel like the body is burning up from the inside out. Often the hot flashes can cause sleep problems, but sometimes sleep can become unpredictable even without them.

You Have a Sudden Desire to Murder EVERYONE

Mood swings, increased risk of depression, anger, sadness, and irritability are also common during perimenopause. Some of these symptoms can also be because of the above-mentioned hot flashes, but they also can be unrelated to hormone changes.

No More Babies

As long as you're still having a period, pregnancy is still possible.

But, as ovulation becomes less regular, your chance of conceiving can too, especially if your health isn't in optimal shape. If you don't wish to conceive, explore birth control options, but try and choose the one with the least amount of disruption to your hormones.

A good choice would be a technique called Natural Family Planning. "Taking Charge of Your Fertility" <http://www.tcoyf.com/> is a great book, and has absolutely zero effect on your hormones, which can be important when you're trying to regulate them. It can also be extremely useful in trying to conceive, since charting your temperature can help pinpoint when the body is most likely to ovulate.

My personal choice has been hormonal birth control and condoms – I know people have strong opinions about both, but I encourage you to find the solution that works for your body. I had a positive change in symptoms going on a low-dose birth control pill – it made my periods more manageable and actually helped ease some anxiety that was hormone related. I've also had negative experiences with other pills in the past, with weight gain and more uncomfortable periods. Always be careful when experimenting or changing anything related to hormones and medication – check with your doctor and proceed with caution.

He Feels Like a Horse...But He's Not

As estrogen levels diminish, your vaginal tissues can lose lubrication and elasticity, making intercourse and sex painful. Low estrogen can also make you more vulnerable to urinary and vaginal infections. Loss of tissue tone may also lead you to problems such as urinary incontinence.

A good way to combat this is exercises that strengthen your core. Doing planks, squats,

and leg lifts can help. Core braces to help train and strengthen your entire abdominal system can also be a huge benefit.

To combat vaginal dryness, a natural solution can be to use organic coconut oil as a lubricant. I know they say that you can't use oil-based lubricants with condoms, but I've personally never had a problem with condoms breaking because of coconut oil. The theory I have is that the condom isn't in contact with the oil long enough for it to begin to break down, so using coconut oil with your partner is fine. That being said, there are several natural non-silicone based lubes that also work very well (one brand I personally like and use is called "Sliquid")

You Start Walking Around Like Your Grandmother

With the loss of estrogen, you can lose bone more quickly than your body can replace it. That increases your risk for diseases like osteoporosis. This is why it's even more important to fill your diet with my plan for healthy foods.

It's also extremely important that you do weight-bearing exercises (lifting weights, push-ups, rock climbing, etc) or plyometric (jumping) exercises. You want to stress the bones just enough by creating impact and stressing the muscles.

There are supplements that can help as well, which we will discuss later.

Your Estrogen Levels Sag Like...

Declining estrogen levels may lead to problematic changes in your blood cholesterol levels. An increase in low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, and also high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol decreases in many women as they get older, which can cause a myriad of problems.

Perimenopause vs. Having Actual Problems

Much of the signs and symptoms of perimenopause don't signal a major health problem.

But how do you know whether you're dealing with perimenopause symptoms or something worse?

Here are some signs that your hormones are more seriously off balance:

- Extremely heavy bleeding during periods. If you're going through pads or tampons every one to two hours for more than two hours at a time
- Bleeding lasts longer than a week (7 days)
- Bleeding occurs between periods.
- Periods are less than three weeks (21 days) apart

If you go the medical route, most of the time doctors are going to try and "fix" you with things like hormone replacement therapy, vaginal estrogen, antidepressants, and Gabapentin (Neurontin), used to treat hot flashes. I want you to be able to avoid using these things that could further complicate your health.

So what can you do to treat these symptoms naturally?

I'm glad you asked. (You're such a good student.)

For That Curiously Dry Feeling Between Your Thighs... Use This

If you've read through the entirety of Primal Beauty, then you already know about my love affair with organic cold pressed, unrefined coconut oil. It makes for an excellent lubricant, is antimicrobial and feels amaze-balls. (Make sure to find a brand that includes only one ingredient: coconut oil.)

There are about 1376 other reasons why I love it so, but I won't list them here.

But fair warning: it is oil so it can stain. If you're using it often, place a pad in your underwear and protect your sheets. If you are allergic to coconut—don't use it! (Of course.) But if you're unsure, test a bit on your arm first. You'll want to make sure your partner is fine with it too.

Eat Like You Give a Damn

Eating a variety of whole foods helps, and is just as important as ever. Organic protein, a rainbow of fruits and vegetables, nuts, and healthy fats will help offset the uncomfortable symptoms.

Don't Be a Vampire

Vitamin D helps your body absorb calcium. Calcium helps offset osteoporosis. Vitamin D is also great at helping regulate moods and can even protect you from the sun and burns.

Want to nix those winter and summer colds? If you're getting them often, you could be short on Vitamin D.

This vitamin is basically great for your overall health.

So where do you get this wonder elixir?

THE SUN.

Go outside, chica.

Get Some N.O.S.S. (Non-Orgasmic Sweat Sessions)

If the only time you sweat is when you're riding your lover...well...okay, I was going to chastise you for not sweating enough but I can't be mad at sexercise.

That said—you need more!

Regular exercise helps prevent weight gain, improves your sleep, and elevates your mood. Thirty minutes of N.O.S.S. a day is the recommended amount. It's even been shown to help reduce hip fracture in older women.

I can't stress how important this is for your health.

Put Away That iPad and Get Some Sleep!

I'm going to mention sleep a lot in this book.

Why?

Because sleep is key to your health at any age. It helps protect us from disease, helps us recover, and helps us feel great. Avoid caffeine or alcohol, since they can inhibit your patterns, especially if you're struggling to get enough already. Complete darkness helps us get more restful sleep, and whitenoise machines can greatly assist your sleep as well. I actually wear ear plugs to bed every night because I can't sleep with any sound around me. I know it might seem excessive, but if you have trouble sleeping, I'd give it a try.

Chill Out

I can't emphasize enough how important it is to reduce stress.

Yoga, meditation, exercise, crossword puzzles, long baths...sex—whatever works for you, do more of that. And try to do it on a regular basis.

Stress is a huge health disrupter. So develop a method that works well against stress relief and incorporate it into your schedule. For me, that's rock climbing and Scrabble. Climbing isn't just a hobby but a part of my lifestyle—a time that I spend with friends and hang out with my husband and get out into nature – all extremely important things for my mental and physical sanity.

So think about ways that you can incorporate stress-reducing activities into all areas of your life—it'll make you feel better and extend your life!.

The Highs And Lows Of Cortisol

What is Cortisol?

A fun way to look at cortisol is as the "leader" of all our hormones.

It allows us to function and process stressors. We all have stress. But when stress becomes over-taxing, it begins to have a negative effect on our health—a large and nasty effect. Up to 90% of our health issues can be linked back to stress.

Cortisol over or under production can interfere with the function of our other hormones, including insulin, estrogen, progesterone, testosterone, and thyroid function. Cortisol is an important hormone in our body but balance is key to achieve health.

Here Are Some Things to Think About:

- It's a hormone made by our adrenals that increases as we age
- It helps balance blood sugar
- It activates our immune response system
- It's involved in bone regrowth rate
- Contributes to mood and thoughts
- Helps determine sleep
- Influences the activity of our thyroid, insulin, DHEA, estrogen, and testosterone

Signs That Your Cortisol Is TOO Low:

- Fatigue
- Low blood pressure
- Insomnia
- Digestive problems
- Feeling of being overwhelmed
- Allergies
- Emotional imbalances/lack of motivation
- Hypoglycemia
- Loss of libido (sex drive)
- Lower immunity
- Unresponsive hypothyroidism

Signs That Your Cortisol Is TOO Low:

- Hormone imbalance
- Immunosuppression (getting sick a lot)
- Increased osteoporosis risk

- Fatigue
- Accelerated aging
- Obesity
- Insomnia
- Irritability and anxiety
- Night sweats
- Elevated Blood Pressure
- Elevated cholesterol
- Insulin resistance and sugar cravings
- Decreased thyroid hormone function

Factors That Play a Role In Your Stress

Blood Sugar

- Skipping meals
- High-glycemic index foods
- Junk food
- Alcohol
- Fasting too long between meals
- High intake of carbs

Sleep

- Racing thoughts
- Higher Nighttime cortisol
- Lack of sleep
- Low bedtime melatonin
- Inconsistent sleep schedule
- Low progesterone
- Irregular work hours

Inflammation

- Surgery and/or tissue damage
- Environmental toxicity exposure
- Allergies
- Arthritis
- Celiac disease
- Being overweight
- Bowel Issues

Emotional/Mental

- Anger/Fear/Worry
- Marriage/Relationships/Divorce
- Death of a Family Member
- Birth of a child
- In-laws
- Home issues or a move
- Job and/or money problems
- Major illness or emotional history

In order to maintain your body's health, you need to be proactive in your personal healthcare. Don't wait for that doctor's visit before you realize that something is wrong.

Listen to your body.

Feel your body.

Pay attention to changes in your body. (This when that journal comes in handy.)

You are your body's advocate. Consistent, healthy meals are the first place to turn. Regular exercise, regular sleep, stress relievers, and consistency are also major factors for your good health.

Eat on a regular basis and time schedule, and maintain a proper balance of macronutrients (as described in Primal Beauty). You have to tinker around a bit to figure out your own perfect ratio of fat, carbs, and protein, but 25% protein, 25% carbs, and 50% fat is a good place to start. If that's too many carbs for you, you'll know because you'll feel sluggish and you'll gain weight. If it's not enough, you'll feel depleted and have a lot of cravings. So play around with it and use online diet tracking tools to see where you're at and track your transition.

I also can't recommend strongly enough that your exercise be enjoyable. Anytime you can combine some good sweating with FUN, then you get double the results: high activity and lowered stress.

To sleep better at night, invest in blackout curtains or just make sure there aren't any lights on outside that'll keep you awake, use a white noise machine, get on a consistent schedule, and block out any electrical lights from devices. (Better yet, move these electric devices out of the room completely.)

A large part of your emotional health is dealing with and coping with stress. If you have a large amount of stress, don't run from it. Drop it, change it, get it out of your life.

If it's something that truly cannot be changed, find healthier ways of coping with it. Always focus on positive thinking. And if you can't be positive, at least be real.

Meditation is excellent for that, but I'm not really a meditator myself. When the going gets tough in my life, I take a long walk and talk it out alone (don't worry – I stop talking to myself when people are present). In fact, I walk almost every day, whether or not anything super stressful is happening. It's a time for me to just be outside and not have anything pressing to do.

In some cases it can be helpful to try some form of therapy – I've been going to therapy for several years with great success (I certainly wouldn't be talking to you so confidently today if I hadn't had this support). I find that both with my clients and myself sometimes it's the added element of support and being heard that can help us begin to "self-regulate" and feel more at peace within ourselves

Remember: you're in control of your stress. Change it and you change your life.

The Progesterone Effect

Progesterone is found in men, women, and children alike. It's much higher in women, though, and is important to our reproductive system and hormonal health. It plays a key part in regulating many of a woman's functions, including your cycle. It also plays a large role in maintaining pregnancy. And if a woman is deficient during that time it can cause devastating effects.

Let's explore how our body uses progesterone:

During the luteal phase of our menstrual cycle (the second half), progesterone is produced until we either start our periods, or until a placenta takes over producing progesterone for a pregnancy. If the egg is not fertilized and your period starts, it is a new cycle and the progesterone levels drop and estrogen increases.

If pregnancy does happen, progesterone is produced by the placenta and the levels stay up through the pregnancy. The combination of higher estrogen and progesterone keep ovulation away during the pregnancy. Progesterone also encourages our milk glands to grow to nourish a new baby.

One of progesterone's most important functions is to cause the endometrium to secrete proteins during the second half of our cycles. It prepares the uterus to accept and nourish an implanted and fertilized egg. If the implantation does not happen, the levels for progesterone and estrogen drop, causing the endometrium to break down and then our periods begin again.

As you can see, progesterone is very important to maintaining the health of our bodies, especially in the case of our reproductive systems.

What Else Does Progesterone Do For Us?

- Reduces inflammation and swelling
- Helps normalize blood sugar
- Has beneficial anti-inflammatory effects
- Boosts our thyroid function
- Assists in using fat for energy

What Are Symptoms of Low Progesterone?

- A luteal phase (pre-menstrual/post ovulatory) of less than twelve days
- Ovarian cysts
- Sugar cravings
- Low basal body temps
- Infertility

- Irregular periods
- Headaches and Migraines
- Allergy symptoms
- Arthritis
- Foggy thinking
- Gallbladder issues
- Fibromyalgia
- Spotting in the days before your period begins
- Recurrent early miscarriage
- Blood clots during your period
- Cold hands and feet
- Brittle nails
- Cracked heels
- Lower sex drive
- Menstrual cramps
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Acne
- Fatigue
- Fibrocystic breasts
- PCOS
- Endometriosis
- Vaginal Dryness
- Slower metabolism
- Mood Swings
- Weight gain (especially belly fat)

Of course, many of these issues can be caused by many other health problems but this list is just to give you an idea how low progesterone can negatively impact your body and hormonal balance.

What Are Some Causes of Low Progesterone?

Plastics

Xeno-estrogens and xeno-hormones make us estrogen dominant. They come from plastics, synthetic hormones, and conventional meats/animal products. Exposure to these fake hormones make us susceptible to low progesterone. It's such an issue, that even if our mothers were exposed to it, it can cause the dysfunction in our follicles.

Embryonic Stages

When we are pregnant, and a fetus is in its embryonic stage of life, our ovarian tissues are most sensitive to the toxicity of xeno-hormones. This can cause a build up in our systems.

Fat Soluble Disrupters

Xeno-hormones are fat-soluble, which means they don't break down and the body holds on to them. That's why people with higher body fat percentages are more prone to low progesterone.

Stress

Stress increases cortisol levels, which in turn blocks progesterone from its receptors. If you have too much stress, progesterone won't know where to go.

Our Body's Natural Defense Against Allergens

I think it's important to think of your body as a machine.

It's an incredible machine that really wants to keep you alive and healthy. When you are sensitive to something (your immune system has a response to it), it releases energy-enhancing chemicals (like adrenaline) to fight the allergic responses to food. This is how you could get an almost-addictive desire to consume foods that you are allergic to.

SO someone with a milk allergy might crave dairy more so than anything else, and it will be causing harmful reactions in the body. That's why eating real, healthy foods that are low in allergens and inflammatory properties is so important.

Exercising Too Much

It's hard to believe, but you can get too much of a good thing. Exercise lowers antioxidant levels in the body and can actually increase stress. That's why moderate exercise—doing something enjoyable—is so key to your health.

12 Ways to Naturally Boost Progesterone

1. Get adequate consumption of dietary cholesterol. Progesterone is a steroidal hormone and is synthesized from pregnenolone. Pregnenolone is derived from cholesterol. And don't worry, dietary cholesterol has no direct effect to blood cholesterol, so eat up! It's true!
2. Vitex agnus-castus, also called Vitex, Chasterey, Chasterberry, Abraham's Balm or Monk's Pepper can help regulate hormones and cycles. It works to lower estrogen and raise progesterone.
3. Turmeric helps increase progesterone levels. It's found in curry. Other herbs such as thyme and oregano are supposed to also have similar properties.
4. Increase foods with Vitamin B or take a B-Complex vitamin.

- 5.** Conventional meats often contain hormones that act like estrogen in the body (or they contain actual estrogen). When buying meat, make sure to choose organic and/or grass-fed—they're much healthier. If you absolutely can't afford grass-fed or organic meats, then eat only lean meats and cut off any excess fat as the hormones and toxins are stored in the fat.
- 6.** Avoid plastics, canned foods (they usually have plastic liners), or conventional cleaners. Beauty products can also be a problem. Most contain estrogen-like compounds that cause the body to be estrogen dominant.
- 7.** Get enough magnesium. The best sources of magnesium are nuts, seeds, and fish. If you're not eating those, then take a magnesium glycinate supplement.
- 8.** Eat plenty of protein and fat with each meal. Hormones need both for production.
- 9.** Consume plenty of vegetables, fruits, and dark leafy greens. Micronutrients (vitamins and minerals) are important for progesterone production.
- 10.** Use bio-identical progesterone cream if you're going to use a cream. While all natural progesterone in the cream is the same, some contain xeno-estrogens. That can cause the opposite of what you want to happen. Use caution with progesterone cream. Women often have better experience using it vaginally, since it can be stored in fat cells in other recommended places.
- 11.** Research "lunaception". Sleeping in total darkness every night except for three nights a month can raise progesterone.
- 12.** Care for your adrenal glands. Stress causes adrenal glands to fatigue, and when that happens, your progesterone levels can suffer because cortisol can take over.

What To Do When Your Estrogen Is Too Dominant

What is High Estrogen?

Estrogen dominance is the condition in which estrogen levels run too high relative to progesterone, or progesterone levels run too low relative to estrogen. It can happen at any point in a woman's life. Because there are many causes of high estrogen within a woman's diet and lifestyle, it can make the source hard to crack. That's why getting your body balanced and on track can be so important.

Perimenopause can be a primary cause of estrogen dominance because progesterone levels tend to drop around this time. During Menopause, the estrogen levels should drop as well, so the problem is less common.

Common Symptoms Associated with Estrogen Dominance

- Weight Gain
- PMS
- Mood Swings
- High Emotional Sensitivity
- Heavy Periods
- Breast Tenderness
- Headaches
- Decreased Sex Drive
- Sluggish Metabolism
- Insomnia

Conditions That May Occur Because of Estrogen Dominance

- Cystic Fibroids
- Endometriosis
- Adenomyosis
- Breast Cancer
- Ovarian Cancer
- Hypothyroidism
- Cervical Cancer

These are serious conditions! This proves the importance of hormone regulation in the body and why it's important to take preventative measures while you still can.

(Getting this guide was a huge preventative measure...so you're already on track!)

What Causes Estrogen Dominance?

Let me tell you a story about a hypothetical woman with a very real problem:

Ester Strogen is a busy career woman.

She works in an office filled with Standard American Diet foods. Because she's so busy, she doesn't have time to make her own meals—she's a regular at the snack machine and the fast food restaurants across the street from her job.

To stay on top of her increasing workload—both professionally and digestion-ally—Ester downs a few cups of coffee per day. She doesn't skimp on the sugar.

After work, she picks up a pizza from her favorite Trattoria around the corner from her pad. To wind down, she pops open a bottle of wine and spends a couple hours on the couch watching *Scandal* on Netflix.

The coffee and wine make it difficult for her to knock out, so she tosses and turns before getting a few restless hours of sleep. She wakes up tired and rushes to work—ready to start the cycle all over again.

...

I know quite a few Esters, and many of them don't realize that this lifestyle leads directly to hormonal imbalances.

What's the underlying theme?

Stress.

Ester is burning the candle at both ends. She eats low-quality food, doesn't get enough sleep, spends no time exercising, and drinks way too much caffeine and alcohol. These are all stressors for the body, which contributes to increased cortisol, your main stress hormone. Your body churns out cortisol in response to stress, whether it be too much sugar or too much work or too little sleep, and it will begin to borrow reserves it would normally use to make your other hormones—like progesterone—to feed the excess cortisol.

Eventually, progesterone levels drop, but estrogen continues to rise due to chemical exposure from poor food and weight gain. Excess fat can convert to estrogen.

Ester is now estrogen dominant.

And any woman that lives a lifestyle like this is also in danger.

Here are some the specific causes:

You Have a Muffin-Top with No Weight Room In Sight

I'm actually being polite when I call it a muffin-top, but excess fat is no laughing matter.

Excess body fat performs a process that converts testosterone to estrogen. The more excess fat we have, the more our bodies seem to become unbalanced towards estrogen and away from testosterone. This affects men, too. Man boobs, anyone?

Testosterone and insulin continue to climb while progesterone doesn't. It can't offset the progesterone increase and becomes a problem for the body.

You Treat Your Liver Like Cinderella...Before the Fairy Godmother Appeared

Remember the story Cinderella?

Remember how her ugly stepsisters would constantly throw work at Cinderella, never showing her any respect?

Well that's how some women treat their liver.

But get this:

The liver is the body's filtration system. When it gets taxed with things like a bad diet, high volumes of sugar, heavy levels of alcohol, or high volumes of processed chemicals, it becomes sluggish. It can't process everything.

Estrogen becomes backed up and confuses the whole reproductive system while it waits for the liver to clear the bloodstream.

STRESS

I will say it once and a thousand more times until it sinks in:

Stress is a problem.

It's a problem for the body and a huge problem for women in particular, because it can decrease the production of progesterone in the body. During times of stress, a woman's adrenal glands take the precursor to progesterone and use it instead to create cortisol, the stress hormone. High amounts of stress can rip away a woman's stores of progesterone, leaving her health at risk.

Eating too many "X's", "Y's" and "Z's"

Eat too many phyto- and xenoestrogens and you'll wreak havoc on your hormonal systems.

Soy, flax, water from plastic bottles, chemicals from lotions and makeup, and other estrogen sources from outside the body interfere with your body's own production of estrogen. When you're already estrogen dominant, this can become an even *larger* problem.

In a body that is functioning correctly, the liver may be able to clear this excess, but when the liver isn't quite up to speed, it becomes impossible and only exacerbates the problem.

Not Eating Enough of the Rough Stuff

Estrogen is processed through the liver, but it is also processed through the digestive tract, and in gut flora. Low fiber diets are linked with estrogen dominance.

Despite the variables, one thing we do know is that estrogen can be reabsorbed through intestinal walls, so the longer that it sits in the gut, the more it can be reabsorbed through the bloodstream.

Because fiber can assist in improved digestive speed, a proper amount of fiber through fruits and vegetables can help push things through. Increasing fruits and vegetables also increases nutrient variety which can improve health overall by boosting liver and hormone function, and the processing of chemicals.

How Can Estrogen Dominance Be Fixed?

How do you change anything in your life?

Change your life-style.

If you eat diets that cool inflammation, support organ and liver function, and minimize phytoestrogen intake, you'll maximize nutrient status and your body will begin to function more properly.

By eating organic or grass-fed animal products, fresh vegetables and fruits, healthy oils, and some nuts/seeds, you are supporting hormonal and overall health. One thing to consider is that in a body that is estrogen dominant, nuts and seeds can act as phytoestrogens so they should be carefully eaten.

Avoid processed sugars, grains, Omega-6 seed oils, phytoestrogens (soy, flax, legumes, seeds).

Estrogen-clearing foods are the most nutrient dense and those that boost B vitamin levels, Omega-3 levels (fermented cod liver oil), choline (for the liver), zinc, calcium, magnesium, and vitamin D. Eggs (choline), fish (omega 3 fats, iodine, selenium, and vitamin D), liver (vitamin A, B vitamins, and iron, zinc, manganese), other organ meats, and high quality animal protein can assist you on the path to clearing up high estrogen.

Exercise is also really important. (I may have mentioned that once or thrice.) It can sharpen insulin sensitivity, help with mood swings created from estrogen dominance, and reduce levels of stress.

The Flipside: Low Estrogen

What is High Estrogen?

Estrogen is the sex hormone that's primarily responsible for the characteristics that make us female. We can thank estrogen for our larger breasts, smooth skin, wide hips, and extra body fat.

Men have some estrogen, but the quantities in women are supposed to be much higher. That's why abnormally low estrogen is usually the sign of another problem.

Symptoms of Low Estrogen

- Sleep disturbances
- Extreme daytime fatigue
- Decreased bone density (estrogen helps create bones)
- Inability to focus
- Sense of "not feeling right"
- Heart palpitations
- Hot flashes
- Night sweats
- Cold chills
- Weight gain
- Retained water weight
- Dryer eyes, skin, vagina
- Joint pain
- Headaches
- Propensity for broken bones
- Lower sex drive
- More frequent bladder and vaginal infections
- Severe depression caused from above symptoms

Conditions That May Occur Because of Estrogen Dominance

- Decreased functioning of ovaries
- Cysts on ovaries
- Pregnancy problems that lead to miscarriage
- Childbirth and breastfeeding
- Decreased function of the pituitary gland
- Eating disorders and low body fat
- Certain fertility drugs
- Excessive exercise

In older women who are approaching menopause, decreasing estrogen levels are

common and ultimately result in the cessation of menses. In younger women, however, it can be a sign of larger problems.

How Can You Treat It?

If you suspect you have low estrogen, you can go to your medical provider to get it tested. If you're proven to have low estrogen, then there are quite a few "home remedies" that you can use to help manage the problem:

Kelsey's 5-Step Low Estrogen Remedy

Step 1: Pig Out on the Vitamin-Rich

Seek to include new foods in your diet that are high in vitamin C, the B vitamins, and carotene. Some examples are oranges and other citrus fruits, artichokes, asparagus, corn, peppers, kale, spinach, carrots, beets, bananas, avocados, collard greens, chard, seeds, and nuts.

(And I don't have to tell you that raw/fresh is always better than processed.)

Step 2: Get Your Herbs

Chasteberry (Vitex) has shown to be useful for low estrogen. It helps normalize hormone levels. Black cohosh, damiana, licorice, and evening primrose oil have also been shown to have promising effects.

Step 3: Remember to Sweat...Moderately

You say that you're trying to get that six-pack ready for your new bikini, but be careful not to overdo it! Cases where women had extremely low levels of body fat have been linked to low estrogen also.

You know how much I love exercise, but make sure that it's consistent and moderate—activity binges to reach some unrealistic goal are never healthy. Excess exercise can have negative effects by deregulating hormones and can lead to health complications.

Step 4: Cut Back to ZERO Packs-a-Day

There is nothing healthy about smoking tobacco.

Yup: 0% healthy qualities.

Tobacco can lower estrogen by messing with your endocrine system. It has also been linked to infertility and early menopause.

Stay. Away.

Step 5: Say NO to Starbucks

There are studies that link caffeine usage to increased estrogen. It might be beneficial to cut back or lay off while trying to balance estrogen.

Androgen Overload!

Many people think of androgens as the “male hormones”, but both sexes produce them—just in different amounts. You may be surprised to know that androgens perform over 200 different actions in women.

The main androgens are testosterone and androstenedione. Men have much higher levels of both and they are important in the production of male traits and reproductive activity.

The other androgens present include DHT (dihydrotestosterone, DHEA (dehydroepiandrosterone, and DHEA-S (DHEA sulfate)). In a woman, these androgens are converted into estrogens.

Androgens in Women: What Are They Up To?

In women, androgens are produced in the ovaries, adrenal glands, and fat cells. Women can produce too little or too much of them, which leads to the common problem of excess androgens.

Androgens are partially responsible for the hormonal rush that begins puberty, stimulating hair growth in the pubic areas and underarms. They also help regulate many organ functions, including the reproductive tract, kidneys, bones, liver, and muscle. In women, androgens are necessary for estrogen synthesis and are a key to preventing bone loss, as well as sexual desire and satisfaction.

They are also super important when it comes to regular functionality of the body before, after, and during menopause.

What Happens When You Have Too Many?

Excess amounts of androgens can cause “virilizing” effects such as acne, hirsutism (excess hair growth in “inappropriate” places like the chin and upper lip), and thinning hair.

(Basically, they can make you look like a dude.)

Many women with high levels of a form of testosterone that’s called “free” testosterone have PCOS (polycystic ovarian syndrome) characterized by irregular or absent menstrual cycles, infertility, blood sugar disorders, and sometimes excess hair growth and acne.

High levels of androgens are also associated with insulin resistance, diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, oxidative stress, preeclampsia, and heart disease.

No bueno.

In addition to PCOS, other causes of high androgens include congenital adrenal hyperplasia (a genetic disorder affecting the adrenal glands) and other adrenal abnormalities, and ovarian or adrenal tumors. Some anabolic steroids can cause hyperandrogenic symptoms.

Basically, this can be a big problem.

So let's talk about some ways that you could take care of this problem:

Natural Ways to Control Androgen Excess

- Decrease inflammation and cell membrane response to hormones by getting essential fatty formulations that have a high EPA:DHA ratio
- Decrease oxidative stress with an antioxidant rich diet
- Avoid Fructose
- Avoid Soy
- Eat a low carbohydrate diet
- Avoid dairy since it's androgenic
- Lower amount of cruciferous vegetables
- Eat plenty of fat since it's crucial in the production of hormones
- Stay away from Omega-6 PUFAs (Polyunsaturated fatty acids)
- Fast
- Eat grapefruit since it inhibits the enzyme CYP1A2 that clears estrogen out of the body.
- Eat magnesium-rich foods
- Eat Beta Carotene containing foods to increase progesterone
- Eat foods good for the liver.
- The best are foods high in choline, like eggs and organ meats.
- Eat organic meat or wild game as often as possible.
- Drink spearmint tea since it's highly regarded as a testosterone blocker.
- Supplements that can be used to help deficiencies include selenium, iodine, chromium, B vitamins, zinc, Co-Enzyme Q10, Magnesium, Boron (found in apples)
- Herbs that have shown to help include Vitex/Chasteberry, Saw Palmetto, Milk Thistle, and Spearmint tea
- Exercise (moderately)
- Sleep
- Identify and perform stress-relieving activities

There are a wide variety of options to treat problems with excess androgens but one of the simplest places to start is through a whole diet low in carbohydrates and with plenty of quality sleep and moderate exercise.

(Are you beginning to see a pattern here?)

What To Do When Your Thyroid Is Hypo

The thyroid is a butterfly-shaped gland that's in front of your neck. Its job is to control the way your body makes energy.

Low Thyroid is known as hypothyroidism.

Hypothyroidism means your thyroid isn't making enough of the thyroid hormones.

Having a low level of thyroid hormone can negatively affect your whole body. It can leave you tired and weak, raise your cholesterol levels, and even harm a baby during pregnancy. It can affect you at any age, but is more common in older adults. Your risks of getting it are higher if you have a family history of the condition.

Surprisingly, most cases of hypothyroidism are actually autoimmune thyroiditis, or "Hashimoto's". Hashimoto's is diagnosed in part by finding thyroid antibodies in your blood. In other words, it's when your hypothyroidism is caused by your OWN body attacking your OWN thyroid. Conventional docs don't really care, though, because their treatment is always the same, and rarely works: thyroid medication.

Symptoms of Hypothyroidism

- Feeling tired
- Feeling weak
- Depression
- Dry skin
- Yellow skin
- Coarse or thinning hair
- Slow body movements
- Cold skin
- Brittle nails
- Not being able to handle the cold
- Constipation
- Memory problems or unclear thinking
- Heavy or irregular menstrual periods
- Enlarged thyroid gland (goiter)
- Modest weight gain
- Swelling of arms, hands, legs, and feet.
- Facial puffiness, especially around the eyes
- Hoarseness
- Muscle Aches and Cramps

Symptoms will occur over time, at a slow pace. You might not notice them right away, or you may mistake them as part of the aging process.

Causes of Hypothyroidism

- Hashimoto's disease
- Thyroid surgery
- Food Sensitivities
- Gluten
- Heavy Metal toxicity
- Nutritional Deficiencies
- Stress
- Radioactive iodine therapy
- External beam radiation
- Infections: They can damage the thyroid temporarily
- Medicines that can interfere with normal production of the thyroid gland
- Disorders of the pituitary gland
- Excess iodine
- Congenital hypothyroidism

Ways to Support Better Thyroid Function

- Get blood tests run. TSH, free T3, free T4, TPO and anti-thyroglobulin antibodies
- Check for Celiac disease from a celiac panel
- Consider heavy metal toxicity
- Check levels of vitamin D

Once it's been confirmed that you have a low functioning thyroid, here are some ways you can help support recovery:

- Eliminate causes like food sensitivities, gluten, heavy metals, and nutritional deficiencies
- It has been shown that gluten grains and non-gluten grains alike cause hypothyroidism. Take the grains out.
- Eat a diet of optimal nutrition. Foods that include zinc, iodine, omega-3 fats, and selenium
- Exercise
- Reduce stress. Stress can cause adrenal exhaustion.
- Supplements to enhance thyroid function.
- Therapy and hormones for extreme cases. These can be determined by a functional medicine practitioner after a thorough exam and blood tests

Most options for healing a low thyroid through conventional care are lacking in additional support. They don't always address the root cause and only treat the symptoms. Improving your health from the inside out will assist in your treatment and journey to better health.

Create A Life That Serves Your Needs

I know that reading all these tips at once can be a bit overwhelming, especially if you're far off the mark already.

But the overall message here is that if you want a healthy life, then you have to get on board with a healthy lifestyle.

Here's how you can begin:

- Get the junk food out of the house. Donate it. Get it out of your fridge and out of your life.
- Find ways to be active in as many different places as you have available to you. Go for a bike ride. Plan picnics with healthy food in places you can hike to get to. Park farther away in the parking lot.
- Plan ahead. Nothing puts you off track faster than being unprepared. Bring healthy food with you everywhere in a cooler and have your fridge stocked with the right foods. Give yourself enough time to make healthy food. Plan what you're going to order before visiting restaurants. If all else fails, order the greenest salad you can with lots of veggies topped with olive oil and vinegar.
- Get rid of products that contain harmful chemicals. Opt for the "natural" alternatives instead.
- Use glass or stainless steel over plastic.
- Try and get your family and other housemates on board. It's always easier if everyone around you is doing it with you.
- Research as much as you can about your condition.
- Keep your vitamins and supplements in view or somewhere that will remind you to take them.

The Stress Buster: Doing Things You Love

Whatever your interests are, you can use them to create the life you want and become more active. Your interests are a great place to start to look for ways to enrich your life.

The Great Outdoors

The outdoors are a great way to get active, plus you'll get the added benefit of vitamin D. Biking, swimming, hiking, walks, jogging, sprinting, surfing, horseback riding, swimming, skiing, sports, rock climbing, gardening, walking your dog, and many other activities can help get in shape and bring about positive health.

The Gymnasium

Whether you have a personal trainer or are going at it on your own, going to the gym can be an excellent way to get in exercise. You could do anything from a sprint session on the treadmill, to a Cross-fit-esque 20-minute workout with dumbbells and a floor mat.

There are also weight machines and free weights. Building muscle is excellent for hormone regulation and weight loss. The even better part is that it helps you build strength, which is important for healthy bones later in life, as well as mobility for years to come.

Most gyms also offer fun classes where you can get a challenging workout in a social environment. The other bonus to the gym is childcare if you have children. It's a great way to get a break.

Activities at Home

There is a lot you can do at home to help get in shape and enjoy it. Walking your neighborhood, dancing to music, doing exercises while watching a favorite program or movie, doing online or DVD workouts, even home improvements can all help you be more active without leaving the house.

I had a friend buy a Groupon for a pole-dancing class once. She got so into it that she installed a pole in her house for home pole-dancing workouts!

Classes

Have you ever wanted to swing dance? Bellydance? Paint? Play guitar? Practice yoga? Write? There's an unlimited amount of fun classes you can take. Whether they are active

or not, they can help relieve stress by making friends and creating new hobbies. And if they are active, they will help you continue to increase your movement. Many times programs through local parks departments are actually affordable too.

Taking Advantage Of The Technological Age

When I was a youngster, my best friend's mom used to work out to videos and tune into television workouts. She'd have to manually count her food and write it all out in books and on paper. She also had to travel almost 30 minutes away to go to a gym she liked. Things are so much easier now and we are lucky to live in such an advanced time.

There are apps for recipes, food, exercise, menstrual cycle trackers, weight trackers, heart-rate trackers, and so much more.

Go online and there is even more to tap into. From specialized workouts to information and recipes to just about any food request—the world is at your fingertips.

Another option in this advanced technological age is video games for workouts. From the Wii-Fit to the Xbox 360 Kinect to even newer systems that are coming out as I type these words, you can get fun workout sessions in with a video game system. Boxing, bowling, archery, and so many other games can get you moving and having fun.

Here are some apps and websites I enjoy and use:

Apps:

- Fertility Friend: a fertility tracker
- MyFitnessPal: a place to log food and fitness
- Runkeeper: a way to track walks and runs
- HealthyOut: this lets you put in your eating goals and helps you maneuver dining out
- Calm: lots of free meditation tracks
- Daily Yoga: a large selection of yoga workouts
- Mindshift- an app to help cope with anxiety
- Glow- another fertility tracker

Websites:

- Taking Charge of Your Fertility: <http://www.tcoyf.com/> This website is linked with their excellent book of the same name. They have forums and information and suggestions about charting and much more.
- Fertility Friend: <http://www.fertilityfriend.com/> This is another great cycle tracker which is a great natural birth control and way to figure out some of your hormone signs.
- Mark's Daily Apple: <http://www.marksdailyapple.com/> This website discusses lots of health issues, recipes, and much more.

- Fitzb: <http://fit2b.us/> This is an online pay workout program that mixes yoga and Pilates in a way that keeps your core safe and in great shape.
- Elana's Pantry: <http://www.elanaspantry.com/paleo-diet-recipes/> There are a lot of yummy, safe recipes here.

Creating A Balanced Exercise Routine

As I've explained in this guide: More isn't always better, especially when it comes to hormone problems.

For example: too much cardio—especially beyond 45 minutes, six days a week—can actually make hormone levels rise like cortisol and insulin levels. It's better to have balance, and find things that you enjoy to relieve stress.

Weights are Great

When it comes to hormone problems and women's health, don't skimp on the weights. And I'm not talking about 2 and 3 pounders. I'm talking about weights that are hard for you to lift. I'm talking about doing biceps curls and shoulder presses, and things you see dudes doing in the gym. Because they give you tone, build muscle, build confidence, and burn fat. Use a weight you can lift 8 to 10 times, where on the 9th or 11th rep you just can't do it anymore. Then lift it 8-10 times, take a break for a few minutes, and do it again. Do anywhere from 2 to 4 sets of 8-10 reps with 4 different exercises covering different areas of your body, and you have an amazing, fat-burning, confidence-boosting, hormone-balancing workout!

Lifting weights makes you stronger, it helps you burn calories even beyond the time you're lifting, and they help tone your body. Don't worry about getting bulky. Unless you are training to become bulky or eating your way to bulk, your body won't plump up. As an avid hiker one thing I have going for me is toned legs, and I got them by pushing my body weight up mountains as well as lifting heavy weights.

I promise you won't regret lifting. You will become stronger. Just don't push yourself too far because then you will be injured and unable to move at all.

Weight lifting can include just carrying heavy things. Take loads of groceries from your car. Help carry boxes. All of these things can help make you stronger. Just be smart about it too and don't overdo it or bend funny. Keep your abs in tight. Lift with your legs.

Sprint

Seriously, it's great for your body. Run across a field as fast as you can. Ride a stationary bike quickly. Do this two to three times a week for a handful of reps and it will help your body burn fat more efficiently and get stronger too. (Ever seen a sprinter's body? They are muscular and fit.)

Yoga

I almost want to put this in giant letters. Yoga is great for your body. It not only gets you in shape, but it relaxes you, which fights against stress. It helps you get flexible, helps with proper circulation of blood, and helps strengthen your core which holds your posture and entire body together.

If you are just starting to get moving and you're a little out of shape, they've got this cool thing called "chair yoga"! Check it out online at www.fit2b.us . She works with people at any level and some of her workouts even stream on Roku.

Do What you Love and Just Move

Seriously.

If you love something active and are drawn to it, just do it.

Do it frequently.

Dancing, yoga, hiking, volleyball, swimming, surfing, skating, hula-hooping, soccer, basketball, walking, or even gardening. It really can be anything.

It's important that we move, but not so important to burn tons and tons of calories. The more you enjoy it, the healthier it will be for you because you will relieve stress too.

Golden Relaxation Techniques

If there is one thing idea I've been trying really hard to impress upon you, it's...

Stress relief.

Simplify your life. Build relationships with people that respect you and show love and trust. Treat others well because it will reduce conflict. Give your body ample sleep in a safe environment.

And find ways to relax!

Meditation

Whether you go to a professional, purchase relaxation tracks on iTunes, watch meditative YouTube videos, or just do some deep breathing and reflection on your own—meditation can be a wonderful way to rid your body of stress.

Do a quick search and you'll find plenty of meditation resources that can help with all kinds of problems including restful sleep.

Baths

I love baths after a long day. I soak in Epsom salt (great for magnesium supplementation) and a couple drops of essential oil and either read or listen to music.

It's a great way to unwind and relax your muscles.

Music

Music is a great way to unwind and relax. I occasionally go on a search for new songs that inspire me on YouTube by searching artists I like and clicking on other related videos.

Friends can be a great source, or going on Spotify or Pandora has always given me awesome new music options.

Massage

Whether you have a lover or friend give you a good back massage or whether you pay a professional, massage can be great for relaxation and circulation.

Many times you can find someone affordable on the local deal sites, or from a recommendation from a local chiropractor.

Swimming

Great exercise and wonderful relaxation – two birds with one stone.

Visiting Places You Love

Whether it's the mountains, the beach, a park, a lake, the river, or just a drive in the country, sometimes just being somewhere you enjoy (alone or even with someone you love) can be the best way to unwind.

Yoga

Have I mentioned how much I love yoga?

It leaves you rejuvenated and in a peaceful state. I've mentioned the benefits to your body in general but there are also many sources for workouts and poses that will send you into a special zone of relaxation and bliss

Final Thoughts

I want you to remember that your hormone health--and your health overall-- is in your hands.

You have so much power—don't give it away. Don't give it away to your doctors; don't give it away to your environment; don't give it away to blame.

It's yours—own it.

Love yourself. Really love yourself and none of this will seem hard. Little by little you'll incorporate these suggestions into your life, they'll become habits, and soon enough you'll be glowing...from the inside out.

It's really that simple.

Your friend on the path,
Kelsey Ales.

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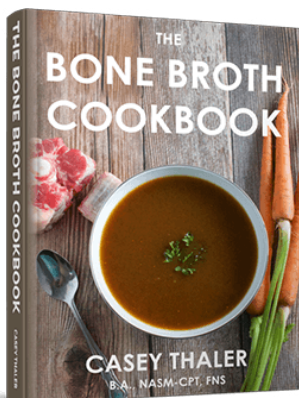


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