

Guide to Natural Hormone Balance



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Hi and Welcome!

Congratulations! You have just taken the first step to regaining control over your hormones. Understanding how they may affect your body helps you to take action. When you feed your body with the foods it loves and live a more relaxing happy life, hormones behave themselves. You will be amazed how much better you will feel and the new energy and vitality you will discover.

My goal is to help you through this journey. As a Certified Functional Medicine Practitioner and Health Coach, I am dedicated to helping clients with their health journey.

Striving to achieve health and wellbeing is a process which can include improvements and sometimes minor setbacks. The body needs time to re-adjust its settings, clear out waste materials and build new tissues in order to perform more effectively.

I am here to support you through the process, answering your questions and providing any extra information you may need.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me on 01772 802041 or at support@tokibirch.com

Remember to be patient and be kind to yourself.

Toki Birch



Medical Disclaimer

All information in this document is for informational purposes only. It is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent health problems. For all serious health issues, please contact a medical or nutrition practitioner. The information provided is based on the best knowledge of the author at the time of writing and we do not assume liability for the information, be it direct or indirect, consequentially, special exemplary or other damages. In all circumstances, it is always wise to consult your physician before changing your diet, taking supplements or starting exercise or health program.

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UNDERSTANDING HORMONES

When the word “hormones” is used, most think of oestrogen, progesterone and testosterone. The truth is that we have many hormones that regulate the functions in our bodies and interact with each other, making them more complicated than the average person would assume.

Healthy hormones are not just reproductive hormones, but also adrenal, thyroid, liver, digestive and intestinal, and they all have to function properly.



This guide will help you unravel the complexity of it all so you'll understand what helps hormones. The benefit is that it does not matter if you are seeing a naturopath, a medical doctor or a nutrition professional. Learning about testing, foods and lifestyle habit that will improve hormone health works in conjunction with any protocol you may be following.

The goal is to reboot your body's functions by supplying it with foods that it can use to support the systems that are involved in regulating your hormones. This information helps women, menopausal women and men.

Let's start by discussing what it means to have balanced hormones:

- ✓ You spend your day feeling calm and energised. You don't feel stressed or overwhelmed.
- ✓ For females, periods are not necessarily 28 days apart, but they are regular.
- ✓ You go to sleep at a reasonable hour and sleep through the night, getting 7-8 hours of sleep (it is fine to have an afternoon nap when needed, as that is part of our natural sleep cycle).
- ✓ You have good brain function - the fog has lifted and your memory and focus are regular.



- ✓ Your hair grows where it is supposed to grow and not elsewhere.
- ✓ Your muscles and joints are not sore and you feel limber.
- ✓ Your skin is clear and smooth and not dry.
- ✓ For menopausal women, typical symptoms of hot flashes and weight gain are not an issue.
- ✓ For men, testosterone levels are balanced and you feel strong and vital.
- ✓ You maintain a good sex drive and you function as you should.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE FOR THIS TO OCCUR?

Stable blood sugar – this means it does not fluctuate from high to low throughout the day.



The adrenal glands should be balanced and not secreting too much cortisol throughout the day. When you are stressed, excess cortisol makes you burn carbohydrates, causing your blood sugar to swing up and down.

This does not happen when your hormones are balanced. Also, your adrenals leave your progesterone production alone, allowing for the proper amount rather than blocking the process so the adrenals can produce more cortisol instead.

The ovaries produce normal amounts of estrogen, progesterone and testosterone. The liver works optimally, aiding in the detoxification of any toxins or excess hormones that you produce or any toxins that you ingest. It helps convert your T4 thyroid hormone to the active T3 that you need. It produces sufficient cholesterol to help you make sex hormones and also makes bile that helps breakdown fat and excrete toxins. The liver also helps maintain stable blood sugar.

The thyroid regulates your metabolism so you feel great.

The digestive system works to make you feel comfortable after eating and ensures that the nutrients from your food are available to help nourish your body.

Your intestines are full of the right amount of good gut bacteria which plays a regulatory role for everything including the adrenals, the liver, the thyroid and blood sugar. They also aid the elimination of toxins, play a protective role against many health conditions, and help regulate all of your hormones.



HORMONE IMBALANCE

Hormone imbalance is a common problem among women. It can lead to health problems like obesity, depression, low libido, and more. A hormone imbalance does not happen overnight, and it takes time to bring your body back into balance. This means that you need to be patient with yourself and your body as it adjusts itself back into balance after a period.

It's important to identify the symptoms that are a result of hormone imbalance to have a better idea of what might be causing it.



The following are some common signs and symptoms for an imbalance:

- Decreased sex drive
- Irritability or mood swings.
- Weight gain or loss without trying.
- Insomnia.
- Poor sleep quality or excessive sleeping.
- Blurred vision light sensitivity and headache that gets worse when you stand up from sitting for a long time.
- Fatigue and weakness with increased sweating during exercise.
- Decrease in mood or ability to feel emotions.
- Increased hunger, especially for sweets and carbohydrates.
- Intolerance to cold temperatures, dry skin, and/or regular sweating.
- Initial increase in energy followed by exhaustion.
- Increased irritability and anxiety.

Some other symptoms that could indicate hormone imbalance are irregular periods, chronic pain or fatigue, acne, or weight gain.

The good news is that treatments are available, from bio-identical hormone replacement therapy to more natural options. This guide will talk about the natural options available to support hormone balance.

If you want to learn how changing your diet, developing hormone-balancing lifestyle habits, and using herbs and essential oils can help support your hormone health – keep reading.

MENOPAUSE

Menopause is basically when menstrual periods stop, and occurs around the age of 50-55, although it can be earlier. Menopause is not a disease, but a natural change of life and if other imbalances are already present, these can surface at menopause and cause symptoms.



The following are some common signs and symptoms of menopause:

- Hot flashes
- Brain fog
- Mood swings
- Aches/pains
- Osteoporosis/reduced bone health
- Weight gain, and many more
- Insomnia
- Fatigue
- Low libido
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Vaginal dryness/pain

Now, just because they are common symptoms does not mean that it is normal to experience them.

In healthy women, the only menopausal symptoms that should be experienced are irregular periods during perimenopause, then no periods as well as twelve to eighteen months of mild hot flashes. The only reasons why the other symptoms occur is because there are previous underlying imbalances in other body systems and organs which are worsened due to hormonal dysfunction during menopause.

When we experience menopause, we tend to blame the ovaries, but the adrenals, gut and thyroid are also major players. In menopause, the adrenal glands which are our stress glands take over the ovaries job and pull double duty. To make sure that we still get adequate female hormones from the adrenal glands, we need to make sure that they are working optimally as they become our second ovaries.

In perimenopause, when we first start to experience the unpleasant symptoms, the first hormone to drop is progesterone and not oestrogen which can remain constant or even increase a little, so taking additional oestrogen at this stage is likely to make you feel worse as it's like pouring fuel on fire! Other hormones like testosterone, insulin, cortisol, oxytocin, thyroid hormones, and vitamin D for example are also important.

Ideally, the only way to know for sure what's going on before adding any hormones to the mix is to test. However, there is a lot that you can do to ease your menopausal symptoms in the first place by addressing the exposome, also known as "diet, your environment and lifestyle" issues before jumping into testing.

Addressing just the exposome has brought about a lot of positive changes for many of my clients.



Addressing hormonal imbalances in this manner is more likely to correct underlying issues and lead to success in managing or eliminating those awful menopausal symptoms, and leads to long-term resolution.

I know many of you may be on HRT, and while Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) or even Bio-Identical, also known as B-HRT can be very helpful for some women, it may not be the answer for most.

I prefer to address menopause and hormonal imbalances by looking at the exposome and lifestyle factors as taught in my [12-Week Marvellous Menopause program](#). Areas like nutrition, stress, sleep, and the environment are vital when looking to resolve exacerbated menopause symptoms. As well as looking at things like hormone disruptors in cosmetics and household cleaners. If needed, we follow up by an investigation of thyroid, gut, liver and adrenal functions, addressing whatever imbalances are found to be present in these systems.

If addressing the underlying issues in these systems do not bring about the expected profound relief usually experienced, then we can move on to hormone replacement after thoroughly testing for cortisol and missing sex hormones first before personalising the protocols depending on the results found.

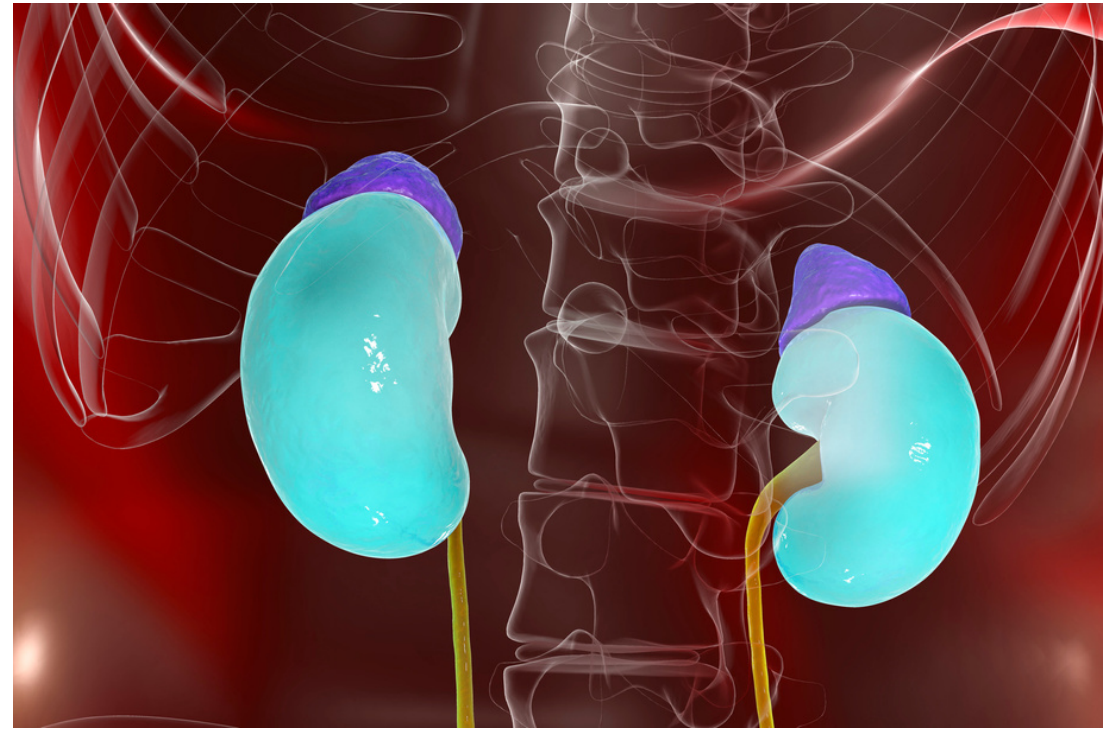
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW FOR NATURAL HORMONE BALANCE

As mentioned earlier, there are several systems in the body that produce hormones and must function well in order for your body to work properly.

The Adrenals:

You may think your brain is in charge but the truth is that the adrenals rule the roost.

They decide if you are going to function as designed or if any of your normal functions need to be rearranged so you can deal with stress. As far as the adrenals are concerned, stress for any reason is a danger and you must be protected. Think of them as having a powerful brain of their own. They can increase your appetite or shut it down. They can signal to the liver to drive up your blood sugar.



They can stimulate your metabolism and thyroid function or slow it down. They can convert testosterone to estrogen and blunt progesterone production to allow for the production of more cortisol, the number one hormone the adrenals like to use to help you feel energised enough to deal with stress (at least for a while, since they are not designed to do this all the time).

A surplus of cortisol is linked to many symptoms including fatigue, blood sugar problems, weight gain, depression, mood swings, anxiety, and menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes and low sex drive. It is also linked to the development of degenerative illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer. Excess cortisol can suppress thyroid function, put extra pressure on the liver, hinder sex hormones and inhibit digestive and intestinal function.

There are many stress-reducing strategies that you can employ, but what you eat and when can make a big difference, allowing the body and the adrenals to have all of the nutrients they need to function appropriately



We are going to go over the various key body systems and how they impact hormone health and other important hormones as well.

Key Adrenal Foods:

Schizandra and maca are both adrenal adaptogens, which means that they balance the adrenal function. They are usually taken as supplements but are also found in some foods. Schizandra is a berry that is often available in the form of dried berries or powder. Maca is a root that also comes as a powder. Both can be easily incorporated into a recipe, as you will see in the meal plan. Licorice root (avoid if taking high blood pressure medicine) and ginseng teas are also great for the adrenals and helpful for hormones.

The Liver:

No organ is as hardworking as the liver. With over 400 functions to accomplish, it is busy and requires plenty of nutrients. The liver produces cholesterol which is a building block for estrogen, testosterone, progesterone and cortisol. It also aids the thyroid and helps regulate metabolism. Cholesterol is needed to produce bile which is essential for digesting fats and helps remove toxins from the body. The liver is the main detoxification organ. Not only does it remove toxins, both the kind we ingest and the kind that our bodies make, but it detoxes out excess hormones as well. There are many foods that support liver health and the detoxification process.

Key Liver Foods:

Cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, Calcium d'glucuronate foods such as apples and grapefruit, bitter foods like dandelion or collard greens, and sulfur-rich foods such as garlic and onions. Milk thistle tea is also very beneficial.

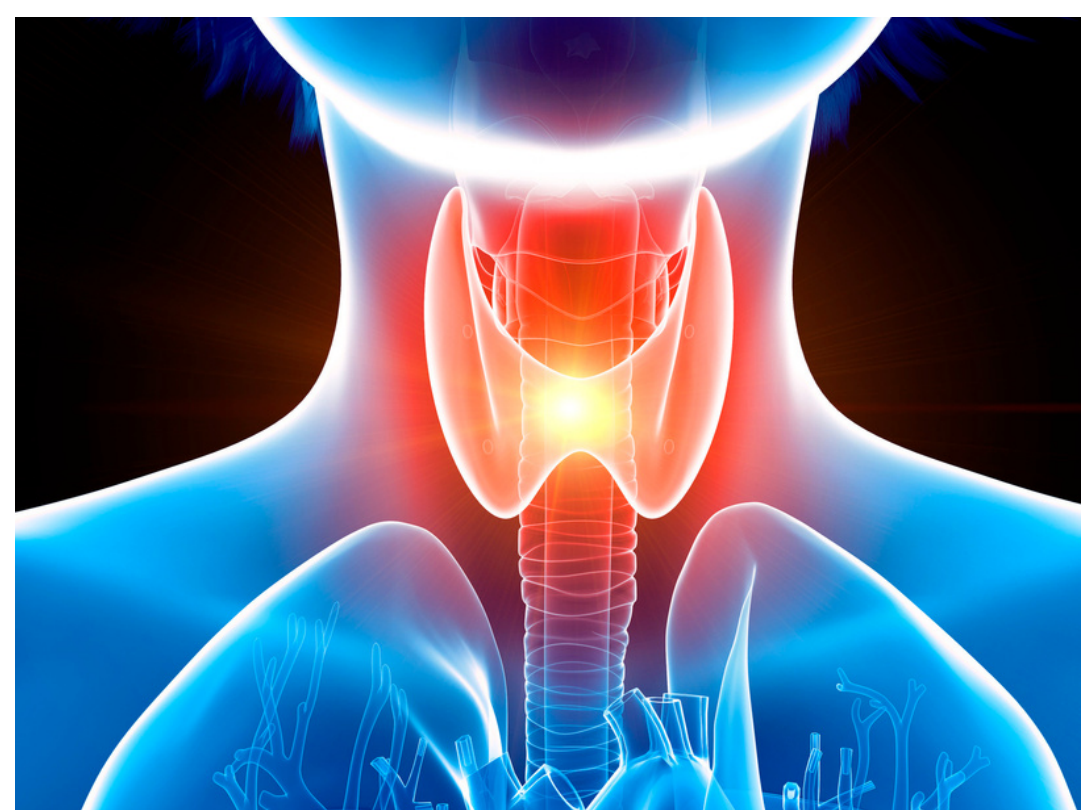
Key Digestive System Foods:

Fermented foods, herbs and spices, and raw foods (if tolerable) for enzymes can all be helpful.

The Thyroid:

The role of the thyroid is to control your metabolism. It helps regulate breathing, heart rate, the central and peripheral nervous systems, body weight, muscle strength, menstrual cycles, body temperature and cholesterol levels.

Since cholesterol is correlated with healthy hormones, a healthy thyroid is necessary as it helps clear out excess cholesterol.



Thyroid Foods:

Sea vegetables like nori or arame, seafood, Himalayan sea salt, and coconut oil.

The following 5 steps will get you started on your way to better thyroid health fast!

The Intestinal System and the Microflora:

The good bacteria in your gut help regulate everything, supporting liver function, thyroid function, adrenal function, digestive and intestinal function as well as reproductive function.

A hormone balancing food plan must include probiotic and prebiotic foods that help stabilize the gut bacteria. We are all unique, so the quality and quantity of our good bacteria varies.

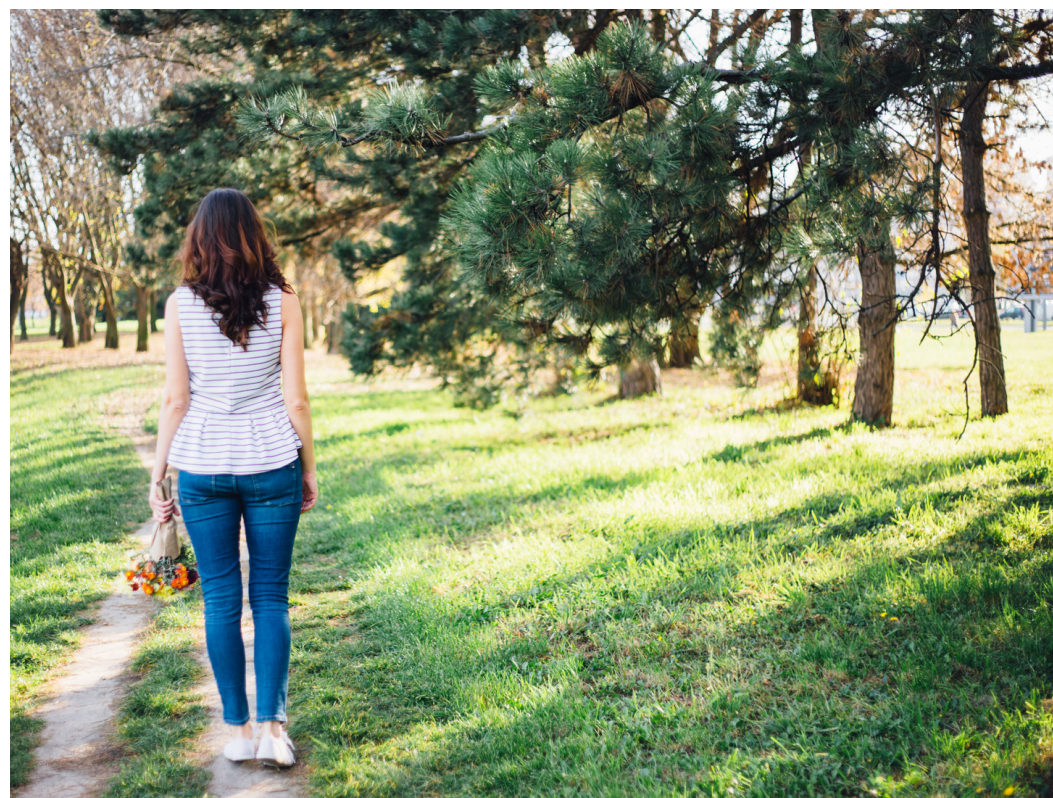
This means that gut bacteria can play a small role or be a huge factor in any health issue.

Gut health is complicated and may require extra guidance from a nutrition professional. However, supplying the gut with the right foods will work well with any protocol.



Key Intestinal System Foods:

Fermented foods, prebiotic foods, fibre-rich foods and water (preferably non-chlorinated – do not drink reverse osmosis or distilled) are all good for the intestines.



All of these systems directly affect the health of your hormones as well as each other.

Because of that, it is an improper practice to work on only one of them. You have to work on all of them. You can do this by working on your stress levels, managing your lifestyle, and taking any necessary supplements to compensate for what you are not getting through your food.

The goal of a strategy for healthy hormones is to support these systems. This is best accomplished by:

- Eating specific foods that will support their functions.
- Improving lifestyle habits, including stress management and exercise.
- Determining which supplements you need with your health practitioner.

OTHER THINGS TO HELP WITH HORMONE HEALTH

- **Get enough sleep.**

7-8 hours is ideal. Go to bed and get up at the same time each night and morning to develop a habit.

- **Drink plenty of water.**

It helps flush out toxins and keeps the body hydrated. Just do not drink with meals as this will dilute stomach acid and interfere with digestion. Spring water or carbon-filtered water is best. Water needs to have minerals, so avoid reverse osmosis or distilled.

- **Practice deep breathing.**

It helps lower cortisol and relaxes the nervous system. As a technique, it can be used throughout the day to combat feelings of stress and anxiety.

- **Take time to enjoy your meals.**

Chew thoroughly and don't drink large amounts of liquids with meals. This allows you to digest and absorb nutrients from your foods more effectively to support health hormones.

- **Learn to do traditional meditation or mindful meditation.**

Both work to lower cortisol and activate repair mechanisms in the body. This will be helpful for hormone health.

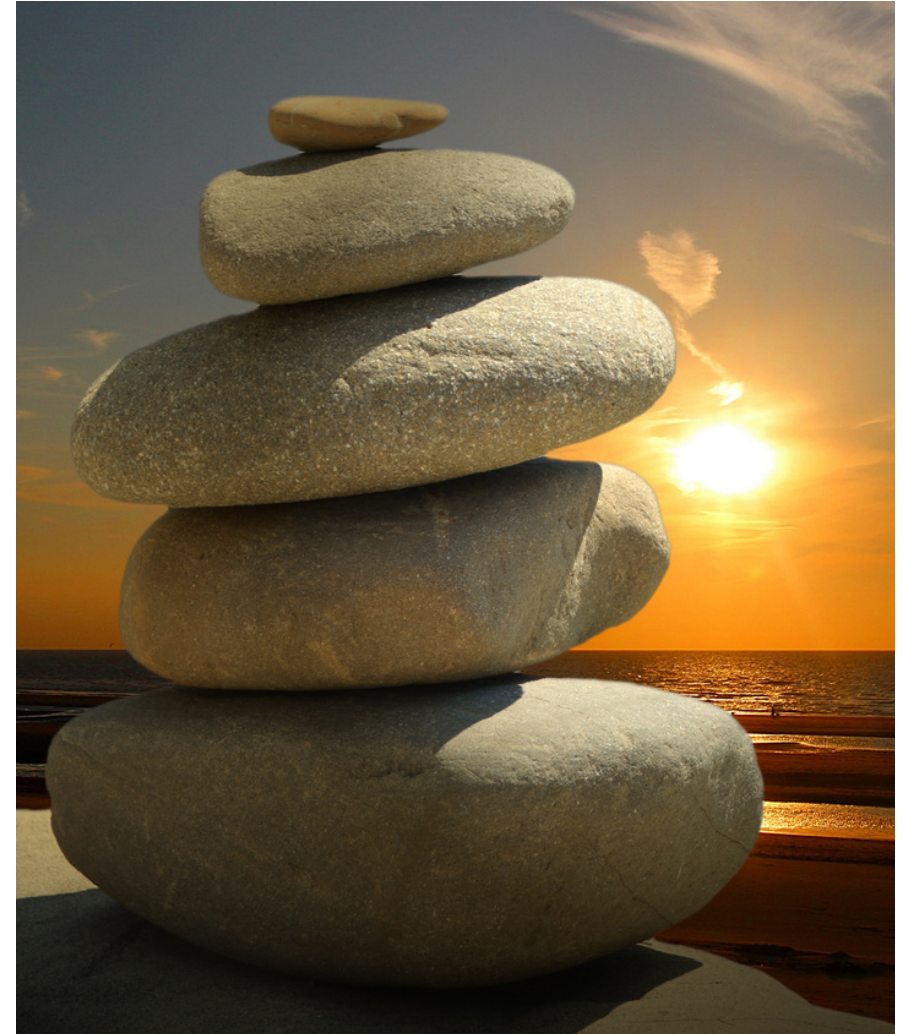
- **Exercise.**

Even if you simply go on a short walk every day. Movement – any movement – is the goal. If playing golf or going dancing is fun for you, then that is what you should do to stay active.

- **Be happy.**

Easier said than done but studies show that purposely focusing on what goes right in your life instead of what goes wrong lowers anxiety and improves well-being. It takes practice but it's a simple process. Take some time every to write down what went well that day – small things count.

Doing it before bedtime will lower cortisol and anxiety and help you achieve better quality sleep.



- [Get outside daily.](#)

Sunlight is essential for good health and spending time outside is extremely therapeutic, on multiple levels. Try to expose your skin to the sunshine at least 30 minutes a day. Even if it's not sunny, your microbiome, mitochondria, and overall health will still benefit from getting outside for at least 30 minutes each day.

- [Detox your environment.](#)

Our environment has become increasingly polluted and it's having a big impact on our overall health, particularly when it comes to the thyroid. We are exposed to more toxins and chemicals today than at any other point in human history. They come at us through numerous avenues, such as food supply, the air we breathe, chemicals found in our homes and workplaces, products we use on our skin, cookware, and so on.

- [Eat a Healthy Diet](#)

Before we dive into eating for hormone health, it's essential to understand; dieting does not work long term (not even the so-called healthy ones). I want to help you ditch the diet mindset. Instead of moving from one 'it' diet to the next, focus on eating real food and making the most strategic lifestyle changes needed to optimise your hormone health.

[Get Enough Clean Protein](#)

It's essential to consume enough quality proteins if you want to meet your body's amino-acid requirements and to achieve optimal hormonal health. There should be a healthy balance of omnivore and plant-based proteins in the diet. Plant-based proteins are adaptogenic, while overconsuming omnivore proteins (high in pro-inflammatory arachidonic acid) can lead to inflammation.

[Eat More Healthy Fats](#)

Healthy fats are essential building blocks for hormones. They reduce inflammation in your body, boost metabolism, and greatly help your hormone levels.

Some healthy fats that are recommended include:

- Raw Almonds
- Brazil Nuts
- Chia Seeds
- Flax Seeds
- Avocado
- Unrefined Coconut Oil
- Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- Salmon and other fatty fish
- Grass-Fed Meats



Add Cruciferous Vegetables to Your Diet

The phytochemical indole-3-carbinol found in cruciferous vegetables has been shown to improve oestrogen metabolism. There are many benefits of cruciferous vegetables such as reducing the risk of cancer, heart disease, and osteoporosis. Some of the best sources are kale, broccoli, broccoli sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, turnips, radishes, Brussels sprouts, collard greens and bok choy.

Focus on Getting the Right Nutrients

Your body needs nutrients to manufacture hormones such as B vitamins, magnesium, zinc, selenium, iodine, and inositol. So, incorporate plenty of whole foods into your diet, such as salmon, shrimp, organic pasture-raised meats, gluten-free grains, beans, legumes and vegetables.

Reduce Sugar Intake

Sugar is a disaster for hormone health. It adversely affects the body's endocrine system, which is responsible for creating and regulating hormones as discussed earlier. Sugar does this by disrupting the production of the hormone insulin. Insulin is a top-tier hormone and has a profound downstream effect on thyroid, adrenal and reproductive hormones.

Reduce Your Caffeine

Coffee is a popular drink that has been linked to a wide range of health benefits, but it can have an adverse effect on hormone levels. It is important for people to understand how coffee affects their hormones and how they can reduce the risk of coffee-induced hormonal imbalance. While it's not necessary to eliminate all caffeine, overconsumption of caffeine could pose a problem for rebalancing your hormones. Try drinking just 1 cup of organic espresso daily.

- **Improve Your Lifestyle**

Detox Your Environment

It is also a good idea to be aware of the chemicals you use on your body and home, as many chemicals are hormone disruptors. Look at the chemicals in your beauty care products, household cleaners, plastic containers you store your food in, and the pesticides on your fresh produce.

Make Sleep a Top Priority

Lastly, ensure you get quality sleep (7-8 hours of uninterrupted sleep). This means developing a new bedtime routine, eliminating distractions, turning your phone off, and having high-quality bedding and mattress to ensure adequate sleep.

- **Get More Exercise**

It's helpful to start a regular exercise routine to develop healthier daily habits. Here are some things to know about exercise and hormone levels and the best exercises for hormone health.

Reduce Your Insulin Levels

Physical activity helps with hormone balance because it keeps your insulin levels in check. While you need insulin for various bodily functions, too much of it can be a bad thing. High insulin levels can lead to inflammation, diabetes, and heart disease. Adding regular exercise, even a moderate amount each week, can improve your hormone health and maintain your weight and overall wellbeing.

Don't Forget Strength Training

Both circuit training and strength training are beneficial for hormone balance. These can help stimulate your growth hormones, improve your insulin response, and regulate testosterone levels.

Exercises for Relaxation

As you will find out in the final section of this report, stress relief is essential if you want to balance your hormones naturally. One excellent strategy to reduce stress is incorporating relaxing and calming exercises into your routines, such as Yin Yoga and simple stretching techniques.

- **Use Herbs and Essential Oils**

The use of herbs, essential oils, and hormones has been a traditional part of many cultures for thousands of years. In the modern world, herbalists and aromatherapists are still providing services to people.

Today's society is becoming more aware of the importance of hormone balance and the effects these hormonal imbalances can have on our health. It has led to an increasing need for herbalists that can provide safe alternatives to hormone-altering drugs like birth control pills or hormone replacement therapy (HRT) prescribed for hormone imbalance.

Adaptogen Herbs

Adaptogens are a specific classification of healing herbs that improve hormone balance by strengthening the body's resilience to stressors (physical, mental, and environmental). You will notice other benefits when you use adaptogen herbs, such as reduced cholesterol, better thyroid function, and improved blood sugar balance.

Some of the best adaptogenic herbs for hormonal imbalance include:

- Ashwagandha
- Maca
- Holy basil
- Rhodiola

Essential Oils

Next you have your essential oils, which can be used in a variety of ways, including in an oil diffuser, topically, or inhalation.

Some essential oils that are great for hormonal imbalance include:

- Clary sage
- Lavender
- Thyme
- Rose Geranium
- Ylang Ylang



- **Manage Your Stress**

Stress and mindset also affect your hormone health. When stressed, you produce excess amounts of the stress hormone cortisol. Cortisol is one of the biggest hormone mess makers! Be sure to make time to relax and practice self-care

regularly. If you have a lot of stress, you need to determine where your most significant stressors are coming from. Sometimes, it is obvious, but sometimes it's not.

A stress journal helps you determine your most significant stressors and allows you to vent any worries, fears, or thoughts you have, which can help you deal with your stress a little better. Purchase a pretty journal and commit to writing in 3-5 minutes daily. If you don't know what to write, start by writing down 2-3 things you are grateful for.

Conclusion

The right number of hormones in your body is critical for good health and happiness. It helps you to maintain a healthy weight, have more energy, feel less stressed, sleep better at night, have a better mood and libido, transition through MENOPAUSE with ease, and even live longer!

YOUR NOTES

YOUR NOTES

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Toki Birch is a Certified Functional Medicine Practitioner based in the UK. Her clinic specialises in helping professional women with hormone and thyroid issues, gut conditions like IBS and SIBO, including addressing stress emotional wellness.

Toki has qualifications in functional medicine, nutrition, advanced detoxification and health coaching. She has helped many clients through her holistic and natural based approach to health. The practice uses state-of-the-art testing as well as your "normal" labs to understand the root causes of poor health with a focus on personalised treatment plans.

If you would like to work with Toki, please contact her in one of the following ways:

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Telephone: [01772 802041](tel:01772 802041)

Website: tokibirch.com

Click below to find out more about her self-paced [12-Week Marvellous Menopause Programme here](#)

If you want to get on the road to recovery, but know you'll need more support, I currently work 1-1 with clients. However, due to high demand, I'm working on a group coaching program to offer support through Menopause and Peri-menopause. This course will be launching in Spring of 2023.

[Click here to Join the Menopause Group Coaching waitlist.](#)



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