

Green Your Hormones

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In my practice, thousands of patients have come to me with the same complaint:

"I exercise. I eat lots of fruits and vegetables. I drink water all day. Why do I feel so terrible?"

The reason they feel tired, overweight, moody, or stressed is almost always a hormonal imbalance, and usually the result of their environment. And when I say "environment," I mean both the environment that surrounds them on a day-to-day basis and the environment that they create in their bodies. If managed properly, balanced hormones and a healthy environment amplify your health in both directions.

When your hormones are balanced you are energetic. You bounce out of bed in the morning, ready to take on the day. Your mind is sharp and you are able to focus on the task at hand. When a stressful situation arises, you deal with it and move on, without feeling like you need a drink or a good yell. Sleep is easy and restorative. The best part? Balanced hormones are just a few easy, sustainable steps away.

1. Get Charlie's Angels on Your Team Again

I call the three main hormones for women "Charlie's Angels" – they are cortisol, thyroid and estrogen. Guys, you've got the "Three Amigos" – cortisol, thyroid and testosterone. These hormones regulate metabolism, sleep cycle, energy levels, mood and sex drive. Think of them as a well-connected neighborhood that works together to manage all the important processes within your body. In this neighborhood, hormonal imbalance is equivalent to a drive-by shooting.

Unfortunately, modern medicine has taught doctors to throw a prescription at these problems and leave it at that.

Go Green: I'm dedicated to finding healthy, proven remedies that correct the root causes of hormonal imbalance and don't require a trip to the pharmacy. I find that when people follow The Gottfried Protocol, lifestyle tweaks and proven botanicals are healthier, easier, and more effective when it comes to getting your hormones back on track. My patients rarely need a prescription to balance their hormones and if they do, it's at a lower dose and for a shorter duration.

2. Afraid of the Dark? No. Your Carpet? Yes.

Endocrine disruptors: the hidden toxins that are ruining your health. In men, endocrine disruptors enlarge breasts, reduce sperm count and increase the chance of prostate cancer. In women, they affect pap smears, encourage early onset of puberty and increase the chance of breast cancer. In both sexes, they slow down the thyroid.

Endocrine disruptors are common in many traditional building supplies and environments, including polyvinyl flooring and wall coverings, wall-to-wall carpeting (a carcinogen magnet), high VOC paints, stains and sealants, and poor indoor air quality as a result of insufficient ventilation. Xenoestrogens are another invisible culprit; they hijack your natural hormones and have reproductive and developmental consequences. In a typical day, we are exposed to more than 700; in toothpaste, deodorant, sunscreen, food preservatives, the lining of cans that hold food, and many kinds of plastic.

Go Green: Use low or no VOC materials and paints, and always stick to organic textiles. Ensure appropriate ventilation. Look for food and cosmetic items that are natural, BPA and phthalate free.

3. Diet Detox

Remember my hormone neighborhood metaphor from earlier? Think of sugar, alcohol, and gluten as really obnoxious neighbors who party all night and never clean up after their dog. They create a bad neighborhood.

Sugary food creates a spike in your blood glucose levels, which over time leads to insulin resistance, weight gain, and increased estrogen. Gluten intolerance – often the result of a diet high in breads, pastas and wheat-based foods – has been linked to altered estrogen levels, amenorrhea (no periods for several months), infertility, and Diminished Ovarian Reserve. And lastly: alcohol. For you it may be an important part of celebrating, relaxing, or nodding off, but secretly it raises cortisol and ruins the quality of sleep you get later in the night.

Go Green: Sleepiness, low energy, brain fog, weight gain...these dietary bombs can totally derail your productivity. As much as you can, avoid sugar, beware gluten and limit alcohol to three servings a week.

4. Lose Weight, Amplify Endocrine Disruptors

Significant weight loss increases the concentration of environmental pollutants and toxins in the blood. Many of these toxins are a result of eating food sprayed with pesticides. Endocrine disruptors like organochlorines and PCBs are stored in fat: take away your body's storage capacity, and it will release those toxins into the bloodstream.

Go Green: Weight loss is associated with so many health benefits that I can hardly recommend staying overweight, but do your best to avoid toxins in your diet and lifestyle, especially if you're undergoing a weight loss program. Eat organic produce, and follow the guidelines I mentioned earlier for avoiding endocrine disruptors.

5. Amplify the Innate Intelligence of the Body

I'm taking the brilliant concept of "biophilia" from Janine Benyus and applying it to the body, health management, and hormones. Because humans are naturally attracted to things in nature, we should find strategies for managing health that are as close as possible to our natural processes.

Go Green: In order to mimic nature when it comes to our bodies, we need to be flexible and adaptable in order to remain balanced. This also means finding natural solutions to health issues. Just like the foliage changes with the seasons, we need to know how to manage our weight, energy, sleep and sex lives as bodies age and life present new challenges.

6. Next Gen Medicine = GxE (the gene/environment interface).

The genes you inherit are expressed depending on triggers. Triggers may be internal (how you react to stress) or external (xenoestrogen exposure, what you eat, the amount you exercise). 50-80% of how your genes are expressed is based on how you eat, move, think, and supplement. To me, that's very exciting news because it means that with a little self assessment and lifestyle adjustment, we can prevent our genetic tendencies to gain weight, get wrinkles, develop diabetes, and so much more.

Go Green: Make sure you're filling in any nutritional gaps and giving your body the tools it needs to express your genes in the best way possible. In 2015 it will cost \$100 to map your entire genome. Fellow biohackers, rejoice with me at this opportunity to find out weak spots and solve them with lifestyle tweaks and targeted botanicals! I have goosebumps.

7. Are you grounded?

Earthing, or "grounding," gets people seriously in touch with nature. The idea behind earthing is that connecting to the earth's natural energy resets bioelectrical setting, reduces inflammation and provides many varied physiological benefits. Don't dismiss recommendations to go barefoot and lay in the dirt as "New Age" – there's some serious science backing them up.

Go Green: One study found that two hours of direct physical contact with the earth significantly reduced red blood cell clumping, a major factor in cardiovascular disease. There are also theories being developed that when earthing happens during sleep, it can correct cortisol output, improve sleep quality, and reduce inflammation. Be a groundhog – I dare you.

8. Length Matters: De-Age by Lovin' Up Your Telomeres

Telomeres – those cute little caps on the ends of your chromosomes – are the best marker of your biological age. In 2009, Dr. Elizabeth Blackburn won the Nobel Prize for her innovative work in this arena. Since then, researchers have documented connections between short telomeres and stress, attitude, sleep, and mood issues.

Go Green: Good news: it is possible to reverse telomere shortening. I've seen it done! Lengthen yours by reducing stress with meditation, yoga or fish oil. Go to sleep before 10pm, the magic hour for cell repair, and get at least seven hours of sleep each night. Exercise moderately (no need to go train for an Ironman).

Dr. Gottfried is the author of [The Hormone Cure](#).

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