



The Menen Centre For Optimum Health Oakville and Toronto

Estrogen, Cancer And Your Health

Most of us are aware that Breast tumors or growths can be either estrogen-positive/sensitive (i.e., stimulated by estrogen in the body) or estrogen-negative (not affected by circulating estrogens in the body). But did you know that several other growths are also sensitive to estrogens? Uterus, liver, lung, thyroid and even prostatic growths have also demonstrated hormonal sensitivity (see list of research at the end of this newsletter). Prostatic cancers are unique in that some are specifically sensitive to circulating androgen/testosterone levels which may benefit from balancing with estrogens. We will discuss this process in one of our upcoming newsletters.

For now, let's focus on estrogen. Remember that both men and women have varying levels of estrogen in their bodies. Estrogens influence many physiological processes in mammals, including but not limited to reproduction, cardiovascular health, bone integrity, cognition, and behaviour. Given this widespread role for estrogen in human physiology, it is not surprising that estrogen is also implicated in the development or progression of numerous diseases, which include but are not limited to various types of cancer as mentioned above, osteoporosis, neurodegenerative diseases, cardiovascular disease, insulin resistance, systemic lupus erythematosus, endometriosis, and obesity. In many of these diseases, estrogen mediates its effects through the estrogen receptor (ER), which serves as the basis for many therapeutic interventions.

While Western/Conventional medicine is working at finding just the right drug to either increase or decrease estrogen levels in the body for combating these diseases, we thought we would let you know some strategies for hormone balancing from a Naturopathic perspective that will be useful to either men or women struggling with, or trying to prevent the various diseases mentioned in this newsletter.

1. **Nutrition:** many people will get their longest lasting effects from the foods they ingest daily. Toxins and other components from many common food sources can increase inflammation, body acidity, cancer cells, candida, interfere with healing, or upset brain chemistry and hormone balance. These substances include but are not limited to the following: All sugar (including very ripe fruit), white flour products (including pastas), dairy products, alcoholic beverages, drugs, fatty foods, processed table salt, processed foods, pre-packaged foods, foods grown and processed with pesticides, preservatives, antibiotics, or hormones.

HEALTHY ALTERNATIVES: eat lots of vegetables and fresh vegetable juices, whole grains, and meats only in moderation. Use organic if possible, or wash your fruits and vegetables thoroughly before eating them. Also drink 3 quarts of pure filtered water daily – perhaps with some lemon juice added (VERY USEFUL FOR PREVENTING LIVER SLUGGISHNESS AND DEHYDRATION).

Please note that "phytoestrogens" which include isoflavones, flavones and lignans are the natural sources of estrogens that many people feel will balance their hormones (found in many foods such as soy products, alfalfa sprouts and even black bean sauces) can either help or hinder a hormonal imbalance. Many studies have shown benefits of using phytoestrogenic foods or supplements to decrease estrogen dominance in the body; however, many other studies show just the opposite. Do consult with your trusted Naturopathic Doctor or nutritionally-educated health care practitioner to know whether incorporating these foods would be helpful or harmful to your personal health goals.

2. **Exercise:** increasing your cardiovascular exercise has been proven to have positive effects on hormone balancing. Imbalanced estrogen levels (estrogen dominance especially) in both men and women has been linked with insulin changes (which can lead to diabetes) and with cortisol changes (linked with weight gain and decreased energy). 30 minutes of cardiovascular exercise three times

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per week combined with Yin-type of exercises such as meditation, tai chi, qi gong, yoga or even simple stretches done daily are ideal for helping to balance all of these hormonal variations.

3. **Sleep:** since much of the body's rebalancing and regenerating work is accomplished overnight, it is important to get enough hours of sleep for your body's needs (not everyone needs 8 hours – some need more, some need less). Listen to your body's personal needs by noting how many hours of sleep you need to feel refreshed and energized upon waking (preferable to test on a non-working day!) and then make every effort to give your body its necessary hours of sleep every night.

4. **Detoxify** your body through either a nutritional cleanse or an herbal detoxification plan created by your Naturopathic Doctor or nutritionally-educated health care practitioner. Since much of the excess estrogens (known as xenoestrogens/chemical estrogens) enter our bodies from our environment from plastics, pesticides, pollution, make-up, perfumes, cleaning agents, etc., it is a good idea to detoxify the bloodstream of these estrogenic toxins two to three times a year with a plan that is individualized to your own needs. (Also note that estrogen dominance has been linked to both male and female infertility and can reduce chances of pregnancy from either partner).

5. **Acupuncture:** Remember that acupuncture can help to guide the body towards hormonal balance. Regular sessions (weekly) are ideal to begin with for 1-2 months, and then can be spread out as the body is "retrained" to maintain a healthy hormonal balance. Remember to always work with a licensed practitioner (such as a Licensed Acupuncturist or Naturopathic Doctor).

6. **Decrease stress.** This may seem like an overwhelming, if not impossible task for you, but stress is linked with hormonal imbalances in both men and women. Take time to relax, rejuvenate your mind and body and to shut out all of your daily worries and anxieties through your favourite hobby or simply by daydreaming. ☺

Remember: **“The quieter you become the more you can hear”** - Dass, Baba Ram

Some Interesting Research:

Estrogens in female thyroid cancer: alteration of urinary profiles in pre- and post-operative cases, *Cancer Letters* Volume 189, Issue 1, 10 January 2003, Pages 27-32

Blocking estrogen may be crucial to lung cancer survival – review of information at: <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/20085.php>

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