

The Essential Oils Hormone Solution

Reclaim Your
Energy and Focus and
Lose Weight Naturally

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PART I

A Hormone and Essential Oil Primer

How do I get help?

Many women find themselves in a hormonal crisis at some point in their lives, and they seek advice from medical professionals who are more likely than not to recommend hormone therapy. But depression, anxiety, weight gain, and brain fog are often linked to the hormone imbalance. Our unbalanced hormones can also cause serious emotional health issues, and many more factors play into who we are as people. We need to go beyond the surface, where we are just as important as what we produce. We can not merely accept our situation. This is why I believe we must treat the whole person.

Many pressures women face in life are all things all the time. It's not just about looking good, though, we must do that too. With a smile on our face, looking our best, and with a pleasant and nurturing attitude, we navigate life not only for ourselves but also for our families, our friends, our co-workers, for those around us. We spend our lives taking care of our families and are often overlooked for it

CHAPTER 1

How to Balance Your Hormones Without Adding Hormones

How did I get here?

Many women find themselves in a hormonal crisis at some point in their lives, and they seek advice from medical professionals who, more likely than not, downplay common symptoms like depression, anxiety, weight gain, and brain fog in their failure to see the woman as a whole. Our unique history, genetic makeup, personality, emotional health, lifestyle, habits, and many more factors play into who we are, of course. We need to see beyond the surface—*who we are* is just as important as *what we present as*. We are not merely our symptoms. This is why I believe we must treat the *whole* person.

Society pressures women to be all things, all the time. It's not just about looking good, though we must do that, too. With a smile on our faces, looking our best, and with a pleasant and nurturing attitude, we navigate life not only for ourselves but also for our families, our friends, our co-workers, for those around us. We spend our lives taking care of our families and are often ostracized for it.

When we go back to work after having children, there is even less time to focus on and take care of ourselves. We neglect. We ignore. We push onward. And eventually our health takes a big toll.

Sadly, the timing often corresponds to when our hormonal levels begin to naturally decline and our bodies change as a result. An easy solution is to blame how badly we're feeling on our hormones. Sure, hormones are at play here, but you *can't* fix hormones with hormones. In fact, pumping in additional hormones may do more damage than good.

A holistic approach to identifying and understanding *who* you are as a woman, and then taking a hard look at the routines and lifestyle that landed you in your current predicament, must be done. Resetting your lifestyle with self-care routines and rituals supported by essential oils will help you to heal yourself. *You* know who *you* are better than anyone else, but learning how you got where you are, what you can do to reverse the problem, and identifying triggers that bring out symptoms will all be a part of your game plan.

So, if you are asked the question, "Are you hormonal?" you don't have to be offended. The answer is *yes*. We are *always* hormonal! Hormones keep our bodies functioning the way that they're designed to.

What we need to focus on is the ever-fluctuating balance of hormones in our own, unique system. No one solution will work for everyone, but a foundation of daily self-care rituals coupled with essential oils will help you discover the solutions you need. You just have to be willing to put in a little bit of work. Time to roll up your sleeves and get your body back.

Hormonal Basics

Hormones are not just about periods and hot flashes. Hormones are chemical messengers constantly at play in our bodies. They affect

nearly all functions—influencing, triggering, and regulating everything from temperature to heartbeat, from blood sugar to fertility, from mood to sleep rhythms. The interconnectedness of all our body's systems makes it nearly impossible to isolate one hormone or one symptom and blame it for all our problems, since the body functions as a complex entity. What I have found in my years of practice is that women usually need to pay attention to several hormones. You need to assess your unique situation to create a personalized plan to reverse imbalances and reset your body.

What many of us don't realize, though, is that hormones work hard to keep our body in homeostasis, relaying important information as they convey messages from your brain to different organs. Basically, everything that we do causes hormonal fluctuations.

Where Do Hormones Come From?

The endocrine system, composed of a variety of specialized glands, is responsible for synthesizing and secreting hormones. Other organs contain endocrinocytes that also produce hormones, though that's not their main function. So while most people know that the reproductive system produces hormones, we sometimes ignore the important function of our adrenal glands, thyroid, and pancreas. In addition, organs involved in hormone production include the heart, kidneys, stomach and intestines, liver, and skin. Interestingly, even our adipose tissue, or fat, plays a role in the secretion and release of certain hormones.

In this book, I will primarily be focusing on hormones associated with metabolism, reproduction, the thyroid, and the HPA axis (hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis), as they are the ones that tend to become imbalanced over time. Rebooting these hormones seems to clear out the body to heal itself with support from high-quality essential oils and key lifestyle changes.

Our reproductive years are the post-puberty years of menstruation and fertility, followed by the gradually decreasing hormonal levels of the perimenopausal phase, before arriving at menopause, clinically defined as the period following one full year of no menstruation. Your reproductive system is still functioning pre-puberty and post-menopause, but in a different way. Perhaps it was named the “reproductive” system since its primary and most incredible job is creating more humans. This is how a healthy reproductive system should function if all conditions are optimal:

ESTROGEN

Produced primarily by the ovaries, *estrogen* is the term used to refer to any compounds producing estrus: estrone, estradiol, and estriol. These three hormones directly affect a woman’s growth and development, as well as regulate her reproductive system—namely, her menstrual cycle. Estrogen is also produced by the feto-placental unit during pregnancy, and in smaller amounts by the adrenal cortex and in the male testes.

PROGESTERONE

Progesterone production takes place in three main arenas: the ovaries during menstruation, the placenta during pregnancy, and the adrenal glands. Primarily responsible for preparing the uterus for conception and implantation, it aids in the regulation of the menstrual cycle and also helps to maintain viable pregnancies. When a new egg is produced each month and begins to develop in the follicle, estrogen and progesterone are both produced.

TESTOSTERONE

Though considered to be mainly a male hormone, testosterone is also produced in the female ovaries and adrenal glands. It influ-

What Reproductive Hormones Do During Fertility

Estrogen and progesterone are the hormones responsible for creating optimal conditions for reproduction. *Estrogen* allows for a soft and thick uterine lining in days one to fourteen of a monthly cycle, before the egg is released for potential conception. It also tells our bodies to keep some extra fat around in case conception takes place so that we can protect the growing fetus. *Progesterone* is produced after ovulation by the corpus luteum (the sac that the egg comes from) and dominates the second half of the cycle (luteal phase). Its main job is to keep that comfy uterine lining in place for implantation of a fertilized egg. If this happens, levels continue to rise to ensure the uterine lining remains intact until the placenta is fully developed enough to take over, around twelve weeks into the pregnancy.

Each of us is born with a finite number of eggs. They are released monthly for potential fertilization and implantation. If conception does not take place, progesterone levels will decline, causing the uterine lining to shed—and our menstrual period to begin.

Sadly, many women experience debilitating premenstrual syndrome (PMS), or horrible periods, and symptoms that they attribute to normal hormone function. This is inaccurate. Your body is not supposed to suffer through its normal processes, but if hormone levels are out of whack (and not just the reproductive hormones), the results can trigger these painful conditions.

What Reproductive Hormones Do During Perimenopause

Usually around age forty, although sometimes as early as thirty-five, most women begin experiencing changes in their bodies

associated with perimenopause, the period when childbearing comes to an end. Estrogen production specifically for the reproductive system gradually slows; eggs aren't always released every month and menstrual periods may become irregular. Our bodies slowly adapt over a period from four to ten years as we settle into the normal aging process. The last two years before menopause are when most women notice the biggest change, as hormone levels drop more steadily than before in preparation for cessation of the cycle entirely.

During this time, several changes happen owing to the decline in estrogen production. As estrogen influences bone density, attention to bone health becomes paramount. In addition, we use energy differently, and caloric needs shift so we can properly fuel our bodies and prevent weight gain and excess fat storage.

What Reproductive Hormones Do During Menopause

After your period has ceased for one year, you are officially in menopause, the culmination of perimenopausal changes. Ovarian production of hormones ceases entirely, but the adrenal glands continue to produce them for the body's needs. Any perimenopausal symptoms usually decline and disappear at this stage. Women become more at risk for chronic conditions such as heart disease and osteoporosis/osteopenia during post-menopause.

Thyroid Hormones

Known as the “butterfly gland” because of its unique shape, the thyroid sits at the front of the neck, where it regulates hundreds of functions, particularly our metabolic function, growth, and easing the body into maturity. The thyroid depends on iodine, a trace ele-

ment not produced naturally in the body, and good diet to properly function. Iodine from food consumption is converted to produce the protein thyroglobulin, which is then converted into T4 (thyroxine) and other hormones.

TSH (Thyroid-Stimulating Hormone). Produced by the pituitary gland, TSH stimulates the production of T4 (thyroxine) and T3 (triiodothyronine).

T3 (Triiodothyronine). Converted from T4 via the liver and other tissues, T3 is the active form of thyroid hormone that affects metabolic processes, weight, energy, memory, cholesterol, muscle strength, heart rate, menstrual cycle, and more.

T4 (Thyroxine). Secreted by the thyroid gland directly into the bloodstream, T4 is an inactive thyroid hormone that functions as a storage component for T3. Levels of T4 in the body trigger the production or cessation of TSH.

Reverse T3 (RT3). An inactive form of T3 is produced when the body saves energy in the T4-T3 conversion process. Low levels can lead to hypothyroidism, while too much results in the blockage of T3 from its receptors.

What Thyroid Hormones Do

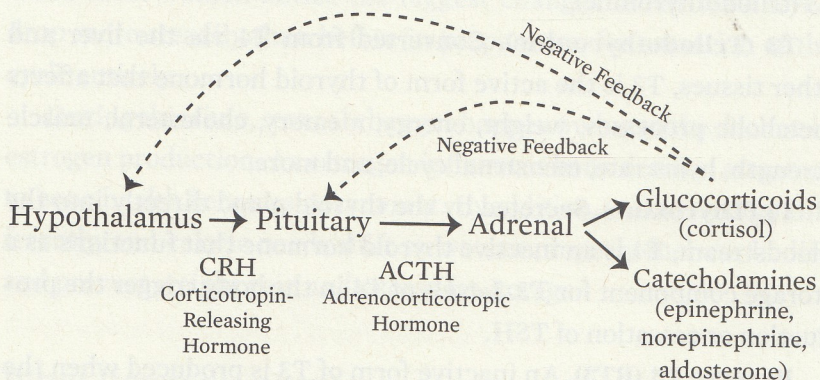
Optimal levels of T3 and T4 increase our basal metabolic rate (BMR), causing our bodies to kick into action. Body temperature rises while the heart rate quickens, and our body uses up energy a lot faster. The thyroid taps into the liver and muscles for stored energy in order to support functions like growth and development.

Often described as a “thermostat system,” the hypothalamus functions as the adjuster of the thermostat, the pituitary gland. When the temperature—T3 and T4 levels—drops too low in the body, the hypothalamus releases TSH-Releasing Hormone (TRH), which tells the pituitary gland that it had better heat things up. As a result, the pituitary produces TSH, which triggers production of

T4 and ups the temperature. Sensing the shift, the pituitary lowers production of TSH and the system maintains balance.

Respect pentru oameni și cărți

The HPA Axis Hormones



HYPOTHALAMUS

The hypothalamus regulates the autonomic nervous system, sending messages directly from the brain to various areas of the body, including the thyroid, pituitary, and adrenal glands, as well as other organs. It maintains our sleep cycles and appropriate energy levels, regulates body temperature, and influences our appetite, thirst, weight, moods (such as anger and fear), blood pressure, and libido.

PITUITARY GLAND

The pituitary gland sits at the base of the brain, physically connected to the hypothalamus. Considered the master control gland in the body, it produces a wide variety of hormones, directly triggers the thyroid and adrenal cortex, and influences the reproductive system and kidney function.

ADRENAL GLANDS

The pair of adrenal glands sit atop the kidneys, where they produce hormones to help regulate blood sugar, energy storage, the immune

What HPA Axis Hormones Do

The complexity of the body's systems never ceases to amaze me, and the HPA axis really gets the science nerd in me excited! The interconnectedness and interplay among such tiny molecules of our body demonstrates the sheer power of big things in small packages. But it doesn't take much to push these delicate balances into overload or completely throw them off-balance.

Responsible for a variety of bodily processes, the HPA axis directly influences digestion, the immune system, energy storage and expenditure, and mood and emotional responses. The claim to fame for the adrenals, however, is their ability to respond to stress.

The primary function of the HPA axis is to keep the body on an even keel, so it activates when exposed to a potential stressor—a short-term stress response. It all begins in the hypothalamus, which perceives the stressor and begins to produce CRH (corticotropin-releasing hormone) to tell the pituitary gland that something is posing a potential threat. The pituitary responds with production of ACTH (adrenocorticotrophic hormone), kicking the adrenal glands into action. They then respond to the stressor by having the body produce several different hormones for our own protection.

The catecholamine *epinephrine* (aka adrenaline) raises heart rate and increases blood pressure, getting us ready for a potential fight-or-flight scenario: we either fight off the tiger or run for our lives. It also dilates our respiratory passages, allowing for greater airflow to oxygenate our bodies for the battle. The adrenals also produce the glucocorticoid *cortisol*, which raises our blood sugar levels in order to fuel this ensuing battle, with the help of adrenaline that aids the liver in the conversion of glycogen (think stored energy) into glucose (fuel for the body). It also redirects the body's attention away from unnecessary systems at the time in favor of survival, so

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digestion and reproduction take a back seat in favor of saving our own lives.

When we perceive the stressor to be eliminated, the body triggers a negative feedback from the adrenals to the pituitary and hypothalamus so that they slow their production of ACTH and CRH. This returns the body to a normal balance and life goes on.

How Hormonal Imbalance Happens and Its Resulting Symptoms

Though our bodies are constantly bombarded from every angle externally, the way it responds *internally* often creates our hormonal imbalances. In my years of practice, I have found stress to be the single biggest cause for hormonal imbalance among women, owing to the interconnectedness of all our systems. What was meant to be a complex mechanism for keeping our bodies in top condition can easily tip into an out-of-whack, imbalanced mess, triggering multiple symptoms and leaving us asking that fateful question: *How did I get here?*

That is the exact question thirty-eight-year-old Rita, a single mother, asked me within minutes of walking into my office. Suffering from chronic fatigue, she looked panicked and exhausted, and struggled to get out of bed each morning. She barely had enough energy in the morning to make her daughter's lunch and get to her demanding job on time—a job that left her feeling overworked and underappreciated. She had substituted self care and healthy food choices with long nights at the office and trips to Starbucks. Once we figured out the core issue, we worked together to get her body and energy back on track.

If we look at the short-term stress functioning of the HPA axis and apply chronic, unrelenting stress to it, our bodies take on an entirely new landscape. Instead of managing the stress and slowing the hormonal response through the negative feedback loop, our

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hypoalamus becomes overwhelmed with perceived stress. In our modern world, stress could be anything from driving in heavy traffic each day, to taxing job responsibilities, to advertisements reminding us we haven't planned for retirement yet. Or, it can be a comment a co-worker says to us, sending us into a whirlwind of worry or frustration.

Chronic Stress = Adrenal Stress

Unrelenting stress from every angle continuously triggers the HPA axis until it is overworked and under cared for. Swamped with excess levels of cortisol, the body senses it's in a "My Body at War" state, with danger lurking around every corner. As a result, temporary shutdowns of unnecessary systems become more permanent situations, causing an onslaught of symptoms:

- Decreased metabolic function triggers starvation mode to save energy for the upcoming battles. We need fewer calories when this happens, but we often continue to eat whatever is available, making it much harder to lose weight.
- There is weight gain in the "inner tube" pattern around the middle, as well as around vital organs and in adipose tissue to store energy. This increases belly fat.
- Muscle mass declines as the body attacks them to get glucose for energy to battle the threat.
- Binge eating becomes commonplace because we are feeding an unmet need, in the form of stress or emotional distress. Add that to our habit of scarfing food as quickly as possible to move to the next task, and eating becomes a survival mechanism.
- Pseudo-famine situations trigger midnight binges and comfort-food cravings, because carbs and sugar are what we really need as fuel when our lives are being threatened.
- Increased sugar consumption overloads the body and creates unnatural highs and crashes, much like a drug addiction.