

Could Hormones Lower Your Risk Of Cancer?

How important are your hormones? These tiny chemical messengers have so much power, and it is important to know how they influence your bodily function. They can also have an impact on your cancer risk, but what most do not know is that they can actually lower your risk of developing cancer. Let's explain how.

Hormones And Cancer: The Relationship Is More Complex Than You Might Think

Hormones affect every cell in your body, determining:

- Your height
- Your weight
- Your mood
- How you process food
- How your immune system works

Read the news, and you will find studies that suggest a direct link between hormones and an increased risk of various types of cancer.

You will read about how hormone replacement therapy (HRT) or menopausal hormone therapy (MHT), which are commonly prescribed to women to reduce the symptoms of the menopause or estrogen dominance in men and women, can cause:

- Breast cancer
- Prostate cancer
- Uterine cancer
- Colorectal cancer

Bottom Line: Dig slightly deeper, though, and you'll discover that there is a growing body of evidence to suggest this is not the case.

Decreasing Breast Cancer Risk With The Right Hormones

Consider the following: In an extensive European study of over 54,500 women in 2005, women on HRT combinations containing synthetic estrogens and progestins had an increased risk of breast cancer, but those using bioidentical preparations did not.

How To Lower Colorectal Cancer Risks

Medical research literature also shows that postmenopausal HRT users may have a lower risk of colon cancer than non-users.

Key Insight: One population-based case-control study of 2,460 peri- and post-menopausal women even showed a 63% relative reduction in the risk of colorectal cancer in oral HRT users³.

Another found that long-term use of HRT was not associated with an increased risk of colon cancer, no matter which HRT formulation was used⁴.

Bottom Line: What this means is that using HRT may actually reduce the probability of a woman getting cancer after menopause quite significantly, which could be absolutely wonderful news for any woman who has a genetic predisposition to colon cancer.

The Plot Thickens: Why It Is Important To Select The Right Type Of Hormones

Most people are not aware of the very critical difference between some types of hormones. Let's use estrogens as our first example.

The Good (And The Bad) Type of Estrogen

Estrogen is often referred to as a single hormone. But did you know there are actually different types of estrogen?

The three major naturally-occurring estrogens in women are estradiol, estrone, and estriol. They are secreted in the ovaries, placenta, and adrenal glands. However, these hormones weren't created equal.

Key Insight: Estradiol is the strongest and most prevalent estrogen and has many effects on the body.

How does estradiol work – it works in the following ways:

- Increases HDL and decreases LDL and total cholesterol
- Decreases triglycerides
- Decreases fatigue
- Enhances libido
- Maintains our bone structure
- Improves memory
- Works as a potent antioxidant
- Aids the absorption of calcium, magnesium, and zinc
- Maintains skin tone and texture

Estrone is the second strongest estrogen and is most abundant in the body postmenopausally. After menopause, estrone is produced within our fat cells and is often referred to as the "bad" estrogen. Many researchers believe that estrone, in excess, may increase a woman's risk of breast cancer.

Hormonal Imbalance: Too Much And Too Little Is A Problem

Another commonly-made assumption is that estrogen or other particular hormones can cause cancer. This simply cannot be so, because no hormone works in isolation; they function as a team.

What Happens When You Have Too Much Estrogen

Let's take a look at the example of estrogen dominance, when there is too much estrogen in the body, during the perimenopausal period. During this time, estrogen levels are usually high, and progesterone levels are typically low.

That can lead to symptoms, such as:

- Weight gain
- Depression with anxiety
- Water retention
- Heavy periods
- Increased risk of breast cancer
- Fatigue
- Hypothyroidism
- Cervical dysplasia
- Breast tenderness
- Irritability/mood swings
- Poor sleep

Estrogen dominance can also increase your risk factor for cancer because estrogen's primary function is to promote cell growth.

Bottom Line: Though seen in perimenopause, this specific imbalance can occur in women of all ages, which is why it is so essential to balance estrogen with its counterpart, progesterone.

What Happens When You Have Too Little Progesterone

Now let's take a look at progesterone. Before menopause, progesterone is produced by the ovaries. After menopause, it is produced in small amounts by the adrenal glands.

But progesterone production typically starts to decline in women in their mid-30s and men after age 60. It is times like these when estrogen dominance can occur.

The symptoms of low progesterone are:

- Weight gain
- Insomnia
- Anxiety
- Nervousness
- Depression
- Pain and inflammation
- Osteoporosis
- Decreased libido

The Solution

The good news is that by balancing any estrogen dominance, health can be restored. This can be achieved with the right amount of progesterone, which can protect against breast cancer by slowing down estrogen-fueled growth and division of breast tumor cells⁵.

What About Your Thyroid?

Those with thyroid disease or thyroid symptoms have more to consider. Adding estrogen will block thyroid hormones, even natural estrogen. Adding testosterone may make your thyroid hormones work more strongly.

Key Insight: This does not mean that women on thyroid treatment cannot safely use hormones, but it does mean their prescribers must be aware of how they work together and plan ahead of time to adjust and monitor thyroid levels carefully.

Sadly, many doctors do not and are surprised when a woman's thyroid levels change after starting or changing hormones.

A Safer Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)

If you are considering HRT as an option, another way to protect against cancer is by being aware of the massive difference between bioidentical hormone therapy (BHT) and synthetic hormone replacement therapy. They are a world apart.

Synthetic hormones give incomplete messages to cells, preventing them from being able to do their job correctly. Bioidentical hormones, on the other hand, have the same chemical structure as the hormones that are naturally present in our bodies, so they are usually well-received by our cells.

How To Achieve Natural Hormonal Balance

Our aim should always be to help the body get back into its natural, healthy state when cancer risks are inherently low. But don't worry, getting on the road to recovery doesn't have to be complicated. There are many ways we can start promoting this natural balance at home.

These are the best natural foods, remedies, and solutions that you can incorporate into your lifestyle for optimal hormonal balance...

1. Lifestyle Factors

First and foremost, look at your lifestyle.

Remember to:

- Reduce stress with meditation for at least 10 minutes per day. Stress can impact hormone balance immensely. Chronic stress, for example, leads to higher cortisol levels, and too much cortisol inhibits progesterone production.
- Get 7-9 hours of sleep daily. Sleep influences the hormone that controls appetite and fat loss. Insufficient sleep also raises stress hormone levels, which will increase your appetite.
- Exercise, to balance weight and improve sleep. This can, in turn, give your hormones a nice positive boost.

2. Opt For Hormone-Balancing Foods

Reducing inflammatory foods can work wonders for your general health, as can adding more:

- Fiber
- Antioxidants
- Limiting refined carbohydrates

Key Insight: The key is eating the right foods and the right times.

If you then add in cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage, which are rich in Indole 3 Carbinol—a known cancer growth blocker—you'll be well on your way to hormone problem prevention.

Broccoli sprouts also help balance estrogen levels. They contain a substance called DIM, which helps your body excrete excess estrogens.

Vitamin D deficiency is associated with postmenopausal breast cancer, so make sure you're getting a little sun every day, and you're taking a high-quality supplement.

3. Support Detox Pathways

We are exposed to toxins on a daily basis. They enter our bodies in the form of pesticides, medications and over-the-counter drugs, fumes, heavy metals, plastics, and food additives.

These toxins can affect the production and function of hormone receptors, and modify the levels of a wide range of hormones, which include:

- Thyroid hormones
- Estrogen
- Testosterone
- Insulin
- Cortisol

Detoxing your body regularly can help you eliminate these hormone-disrupting toxins from your body's tissues.

For a simple body detox:

- Remove foods and drinks that likely contain toxins, such as soda and processed foods.
- Get adequate protein daily. Protein-rich foods contain amino acids needed by the liver for detoxification.
- Add in liver supporters and detoxifiers, like vegetable blends that contain broccoli, kale, spinach, kale and Brussel sprouts.
- Take detox supplements, such as NAC, milk thistle, turmeric, beet leaf and a high-quality multivitamin.

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