

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **What are hormones and why do I need them?**

Hormones are an essential part of the metabolic process of living. Hormones are important for the cells, organs, and metabolism. Our hormones decline through aging, menopause, disease or trauma. When this happens, we begin an accelerated aging process. Loss of hormones is one of the major reasons for our deterioration as we get older, both physically and mentally. Hormones are beneficial at any age, but the best long-term protective benefits are achieved if hormones are replaced when you begin to lose them, usually in our 40's.

## **What are the typical hormones that are prescribed?**

Synthetic estrogen (ie: Premarin) and progestins (ie: Provera) are produced in a laboratory. They are chemically altered so that they can be patented by the pharmaceutical companies. They are not identical to human hormones. They are designed to try to elicit the same responses in your body as your natural hormones. Because synthetic hormones are not identical to human hormones, they might adversely stimulate the cells and lead to side effects or cancer. Premarin is an estrogen obtained from pregnant horses and is not human identical. Provera is a progestin. Both have been implicated in causing problems in some women, including breast cancer.

## **How are bio-identical estrogen and progesterone produced?**

Hormones that are identical to human hormones are found in yams and soy. We call these "natural" because they are natural to the body. The hormones are extracted from these vegetables and then processed by a specialty compounding pharmacy into a prescription dose and form. The body better accepts and metabolizes these hormones as if it made them. •

## **What are the problems with synthetic hormones?**

When first developed, synthetic hormones were well received because they provided some of the benefits of hormone replacement: controlling the symptoms of menopause and fighting osteoporosis and heart disease. However, the long-term results have shown that synthetic hormones sometimes elicit a negative metabolic response. Some women can tolerate synthetic hormones – often suffering from side effects such as bloating, bleeding or mood swings. In some patients, synthetic estrogens and progestins contributed to the development of breast and uterine cancer. Synthetic hormones are not a perfect match in the body. Synthetic hormones produce abnormal metabolites that can cause side effects and increase the risk of cancer. A natural hormone is a perfect fit in the body- it is a biologically identical hormone replacement.

## **Why doesn't my gynecologist prescribe bio-identical hormones?**

Natural supplements such as vitamins and hormones are protected by federal regulation and may not be patented. A lot of what physicians learn is from the drug companies who are promoting their products. Therefore, your doctors are primarily taught only about synthetic products. Bio-identical hormones do not come under specific brand names. Your physician must be self-educated and experienced in prescribing and monitoring natural hormones. They probably just don't know a lot about them or must prescribe within the constraints of your health insurance.

## **What are the signs of low Progesterone and what are the health benefits?**

Progesterone is responsible for balancing estrogen and the female reproductive cycle. Deficiency results in symptoms of PMS, bloating, headaches, cramping, mood swings, breast tenderness, and irritability. A deficiency in progesterone can

be a factor in frequent miscarriages.

Research shows that natural progesterone stimulates bone-building osteoblasts, thus providing protection against osteoporosis. Progesterone reduces the mitotic change in breast and uterine tissue, thereby protecting against cancer. Progesterone is necessary for adequate sexual response, lubrication and vaginal vasodilation. Progesterone is responsible for the physiologic equilibrium with estrogen. At menopause, women lose both estrogen and progesterone and both should be replaced. Progesterone replacement is important, even if you have had a hysterectomy because it does much more than just protect the uterus.

Source: Neil Rousier, MD, 2015