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BIOIDENTICAL HORMONE REPLACEMENT

Dr. Sobo believes that men and women can safely benefit in many ways by natural hormone replacement. Bioidentical hormones relieve many of the symptoms that plague us when our natural hormone levels drop. They may also be a part of disease prevention and play a general role in an [Anti-Aging Medicine](#) program.

Synthetic pharmaceuticals prescribed as "hormone replacement" therapy have for years been among the most widely prescribed medications in The United States. They have been prescribed most often at menopause for symptoms such as hot flashes and night sweats, but also had been touted as a preventive measure for osteoporosis and other problems. There are side effects and concerns about the long term safety of taking these synthetic pharmaceutical hormone replacements.

Many women fearing consequences of being treated with hormones, refuse therapy they might otherwise benefit from. Concurrent with the move away from these synthetic hormone replacements, the field of **Bioidentical** hormone replacement has emerged.

The driving force behind interest in these substances is that people may receive the benefits of hormone replacement while trying to mitigate safety concerns.

Hormone therapy is helpful for more than just menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes. When hormone imbalances occur there is a long list of associated symptoms that may occur. These are important not just for women but for men as well.

Consider how many symptoms overlap between the sexes...

Women's Symptoms

Low Libido
Depression
Forgetfulness
Sleep Disturbances
Aches & Pains
Weakness
Fatigue – "Burned Out"
Thinning skin
Headaches
Bone Loss
Decreased Stamina
Heart Palpitations
Thyroid insufficiency
Vaginal Dryness

Men's Symptoms

Low Libido
Depression
Forgetfulness
Sleep Disturbances
Aches & Pains
Weakness
Fatigue – “Burned Out”
Thinning Skin
Headaches
Bone Loss
Decreased Stamina
Heart Palpitations
Prostate Problems
Decreased Erections

WHY BIOIDENTICAL HORMONES?

Bioidentical hormones are made by a compounding pharmacy, which produces the same hormonal substance that the body naturally produces. Therefore, when a woman or man is prescribed these hormones, what they are receiving is a replenishment of something that is naturally made in the body, but which has become deficient, causing a great variety of symptoms.

The safety concerns regarding hormone replacement therapy have been identified based on clinical studies with women who have been prescribed synthetic pharmaceuticals, *not* bioidentical hormone replacement.

The following are documented risks of the synthetic progestin medroxyprogesterone: (To be very clear, this is not progesterone).

- Phlebitis and thromboembolism (blood clot)
- Fluid retention, weight gain, migraine headaches
- Depression/stressfulness, insomnia, impaired blood sugar regulation
- Acne, hair loss, or excess growth of hair
- Loss of libido
- PMS
- Elevated blood pressure

Notice many of the side effects are exactly the symptoms that hormone therapy is supposed to treat!

Synthetic hormones do not mimic your body's natural hormones. They mainly turn off the symptoms of menopause rather than rebalancing hormone levels.

Bioidentical hormones have a chemical structure identical to the hormone as it is produced by the human body. It is believed that this means they should be incorporated into the system in a gentler, safer way than synthetic hormones. There are areas on the body's cells called receptors. These receptors allow the hormone to attach itself and be introduced into the cell. These receptors do not allow synthetic pharmaceuticals such as Prempro or Provera to attach to them and enter the cell in the way nature intended.

In his book, Natural Progesterone, John Lee, MD enumerates the following effects of natural progesterone (remember the synthetic “progestins” are not progesterone).

- Natural diuretic
- Natural antidepressant
- Improved libido
- Facilitates thyroid hormone action
- Stimulates osteoblasts for bone building
- Helps protect against the formation of fibrocystic breasts
- Helps normalize blood sugar regulation
- Helps prevent against clotting
- Helps use fat for energy

These are just some of the positive effects of hormone balancing. It is worth noting also, that the prescription called into a compounding pharmacy by a physician is tailor made to the exact dose the doctor is prescribing for the individual patient. This is in contrast to a pharmaceutical drug made in the millions and shipped in bottles to all pharmacies and placing everyone on an average dose. Not only are bioidentical hormones prescribed individually, but it is the practice of these prescribing doctors to monitor the patient's hormone levels and adjust doses, if need be, for the patient's maximal results and benefit.

It must be recognized that it will take a long time for any differences in the safety profile of bioidentical hormones to be firmly scientifically established.

Testing for and Treating Hormone Imbalance

What are the hormone imbalances that can be checked for? This author routinely utilizes saliva testing as a preferred method for checking the *bioactive* levels of Estrogen, Progesterone, Testosterone, Dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA), and Cortisol. When these hormones are tested by blood they are testing hormones that are bound by proteins circulating in the system, and the numbers may not always accurately reflect the physiological activity of the hormone for that person. For this reason, many doctors prescribing synthetic hormones do it without even bothering to order or rely on these blood tests. When a person's saliva is checked, the hormones that are detected are not bound by proteins and thus may reveal more accurate reflection of the *bioactive* hormone, that which creates the many effects of the hormones on the body. A proper check also takes into account not just the hormone levels but the balance between them. In particular, the balance between estrogen and progesterone is important. A concept of great importance describing what millions of women suffer from is the condition called Estrogen Dominance. This is when the estrogen hormones are relatively too high in comparison to the progesterone levels. And estrogen dominance can occur even when a woman develops estrogen deficiency at the start of menopause causing symptoms like hot flashes. This is because even though the production of estrogen is dropping, the production of progesterone drops even more, resulting in comparatively more estrogen than progesterone circulating in the system. These women are candidates for receiving both estrogen and progesterone. It is the balance between them which needs to be addressed as well as their basic levels standing alone.

When estrogen becomes the dominant hormone and progesterone is deficient, estrogen can have the following harmful effects on the body:

- Water retention
- Breast swelling
- Fibrocystic breasts
- PMS
- Decreased libido
- Uterine fibroid

- Weight gain
- Cravings for sweets

The symptoms of estrogen dominance can be successfully treated with natural progesterone, with its many benefits as enumerated above.

Testosterone is for Both Men and Women

There is a misconception about testosterone. Many people will identify it as "the male hormone." While it is true that testosterone levels are normally much higher in men than in women, women also need to be tested for testosterone. If a woman is deficient (relative to the proper female levels), then the symptoms of hormone imbalance occur.

Along with improving symptoms such as weakness and fatigue, and depression, testosterone therapy may be protective against heart disease. Testosterone plays a role with regard to reverse cholesterol transport (RCT). Reverse cholesterol transport is how HDL (known as the good cholesterol) removes cholesterol from the arterial wall and returns it to the liver. In the testosterone-deficient state, reverse cholesterol transport cannot complete this process as effectively, and excess cholesterol cannot be removed from the arterial wall.

HDL and free testosterone levels often plummet in aging men and women. This combination of low HDL and low testosterone virtually guarantees a very elevated cardiovascular risk in comparison to the more optimal profile.

Response to Treatment and Disease Prevention

Most people will see the benefits of bioidentical hormones quickly. Within several days a patient will begin to sleep better, and hot flashes and night sweats will start improving. Libido will begin to return and weight control will be noticeably affected over time.

Follow up by the physician should include monitoring of the person's response, retesting for hormone levels after a reasonable period of time, and adjustment of the treatment on an individualized basis. The compounding pharmacy can then be instructed by the doctor to change prescriptions as per the unique need of each patient.

In making the decision to use bioidentical hormones, it is crucial to also recognize the importance of nutrition, fitness and lifestyle changes. Utilize natural supplements as a part of the journey to improved health and prevention of illness. If hormones are deficient and / or out of balance, the body will not respond as well as it could to improved nutrition, stress reduction, and exercise. But as hormone levels return to more youthful levels, improved nutrition, and fitness will likewise enable an individual to feel rejuvenated, enjoying greater energy, better overall well-being, and an improved opportunity for greater longevity.

The best results are always obtained when all the factors out of balance are attended to. The body then functions as a well-directed symphony whose many pieces and complex interrelationships are allowed to flourish, resulting in the best possible health status.

Dr. Sobo is a Medical Doctor practicing Holistic / Nutritional Medicine in Stamford, CT. More information about natural hormones and about Dr. Sobo's practice can be found on the Internet at <http://drsobo.com>. Dr. Sobo's office phone number is 203-348-8805.

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