

Making An Informed Decision: Natural vs. Synthetic Hormones

by Tana Dean

Reprint from Healing Garden Journal, October 2002

Updated, February 2008 (end of article)



As I'm beginning to write this article I've just received 2 more articles about how synthetic hormones are affecting our lives. One stating that synthetic hormones offer no long-term heart benefits and may increase the chance of developing blood clots and gallbladder disease. The other on how estrogenic chemicals in our environment may be affecting the male sperm which can create infertility.

My binder is now 3 inches thick with articles/studies dating back to 2000 about how HRT is NOT doing what it was proposed to do for women. How synthetic estrogen is on the carcinogen list. Synthetic estrogen/progestins are linked to increasing a women's risk of breast cancer, the list goes on. More research, more information with concerns about women's health and research on men's hormones is also beginning to show the effects of hormone imbalance.

This is such a large subject that I simply can't put in all that I've learned in this short article, so this will focus on the importance of natural progesterone and is not meant to diminish the important functions that natural estrogens play in our body functions.

I speak with women who share stories about themselves or the many women around them who are suffering from menopause, PMS, early premenopause, fibroids, breast or uterine cancer. They don't know what to do, but, our women's intuition tells us that something is wrong.

So, what are we to do? Is there help out here? Yes, there is and his name is Dr. John Lee, MD, a leading researcher of progesterone. He has three books: *What Your Doctor May Not Tell you About Menopause*, *What Your Doctor May Not Tell You About Premenopause* and *What Your Doctor May Not Tell You About Breast Cancer* (published in Jan. 2002 with updated research). READ THEM!

His research has lead us to NATURAL progesterone. According to Dr. Lee natural progesterone supplementation will help your body naturally balance the estrogen and progesterone in your body. It can be taken by women from 9 to 99. Younger women are in need of it because of the estrogenic hormones in our daily environment and the severe PMS symptoms they suffer. For men it may be important in the prevention and /or treatment of prostate cancer. The numbers are staggering for men and their suffering from prostate enlargement and cancer.

There are over 80 symptoms associated with hormone imbalance. PMS, migraine headaches, uterine fibroids, insomnia, memory loss, low sex drive, hot flashes, unexplained weight gain to name a few. When you suffer from these you may have what Dr. Lee calls Estrogen Dominance.

'Your risk of surviving malignant breast cancer is just about the same as it was 50 years ago, when the only treatment was mastectomy: about one in three. In other words, despite billions of dollars in research and hugely expensive and risky treatment, the conventional medical approach to breast cancer isn't working, and talk of prevention is virtually nonexistent.' (Quote from: *What Your Doctor May Not Tell You About Breast Cancer* by John R. Lee, MD, David Zava, PhD, and Virginia Hopkins. First paragraph in the introduction).

However, with Dr. Lee's help, there is a movement toward the use of natural progesterone and rebalancing our lives so that we can live without synthetic estrogens and progestins. We can create natural hormonal health and help the young people growing up in our estrogenic environment.

Our bodies were made to work with hormones that were balanced and worked together harmoniously. The two major hormones for women are estrogen and progesterone. Our lifestyles and culture create imbalanced hormones which develop from diet, environment, prescriptions and stress.

It's amazing how natural estrogen and progesterone balance one another. For example: estrogen causes breast stimulation, progesterone protects against fibrocystic breast; estrogen causes depression and headaches, progesterone is a natural antidepressant; estrogen-slows the loss of bone mass building, progesterone-stimulates bone BUILDING; estrogen causes increased blood clotting, progesterone normalizes blood clotting.

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So why is this natural progesterone not shared by the medical establishment? The word Natural is the key. Pharmaceutical companies can't patent a natural molecule, they must tinker with it first in order to ask for FDA approval to manufacture and distribute. Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) and birth control are synthetic forms of hormones that are introduced to bodies that have worked with the same molecular patterns for millions of years. No wonder the body gets confused, stressed out and finally breaks down in disease.

The environment also causes damage in the form of estrogenic hormones called xenoestrogens. These are found in our food (hormone fed livestock, poultry, dairy, eggs and produce), clothing, plastics, perfumes, soap, petroleum/mineral oil in our skin care, chlorine bleach, solvents, cleaning solutions, carpeting, microchips, automobiles, pesticides and fertilizers.



Progesterone is often considered a “sex” hormone because it plays a role in the conception and growth of a fetus. During pregnancy a woman's production grows from 20 mg per day to 400 mg per day in the third trimester. A study done as early as the 1950s reported that progesterone plays an important role in the function of the thyroid hormone. In the 70s it was shown that progesterone helps women suffering from osteoporosis in regaining bone mass. The last few decades medical journals have reported that progesterone helps strengthen the myelin sheath that surrounds the nerves in the central nervous system which protect the body from aches and pains. Scientist have also found brain cells have 20 times more progesterone in them than blood cells. All of this research points to how important progesterone is to women at any age.

When looking for natural progesterone you want to use a transdermal (absorbed through the skin) cream, containing 400-500 mg of progesterone per ounce, supplying 20 mg of progesterone per dose. Dosages are different for premenopausal, menopausal, teenagers and men. Work with someone who has taken time to read and research this subject and is consulting/educating women on the benefits and use of natural progesterone. They can help you find the correct dosage. This is about working with your body and everyone is different. Give yourself at least 6 months. Your body may have been out of hormonal balance for years and if you've used synthetics it will take time to rebalance.

You may want to talk to your doctor. Let them know you want to use natural progesterone and you may need a natural estrogen. Dr. Lee recommends Estriol - a natural estrogen. Request a saliva test to get a reading on your hormone levels. Blood tests are not as accurate. Educate yourself and take that with you to your doctor, you may be helping them!

Also, work with other changes in your health and environment. Our bodies are a unique synergistic system. Understanding ourselves better will help us create healthy bodies, healthy minds and the life that we dream about.

Update February 2008:

2008 and the FDA, Wyeth and Estriol Cream

Now why would Wyeth complain to the FDA about compounding pharmacists using a natural hormone, Estriol, to help women with hormone balancing? Surely you're not surprised that it has to do with money . . . Wyeth is the pharmaceutical giant, whose sales have plummeted, from their products Premarin and PremPro when the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) found that they caused heart disease, strokes and cancer.

Women that have suffered from the use of these drugs are suing Wyeth and winning millions in damages in courtrooms across the U.S.

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Update February 2008—Continued:

Estriol is a mild (natural) estrogen that is primarily used in a cream form for vaginal dryness and urinary tract problems in menopausal women. Europe has established that it is safe and effective and has used it for decades.

Many U.S. doctors who use natural hormones prescribe tri-est and bi-est, estrogen cream formulations made by compounding pharmacies that contain estriol. Estriol can be taken out of the formulations and they'll still work well because they also contain estradiol, another natural estrogen, but, ironically they probably won't be as safe. Estriol has some protective properties that balance estradiol's cancer-promoting effects. Estriol is so safe that it's the primary estrogen during pregnancy, the fetus is bathed in it.

The FDA has to know that it has been proven safe and effective in Europe and yet Wyeth has used its clout and bullied the FDA into limiting your ability to use natural, safe hormones.

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