Introduction to hormone balance through food

Let's talk about how to balance your hormones naturally using food. As a naturopathic doctor, nutrition is very important to me, and one of the things I work on with my patients often is how incorporate certain foods on a daily basis to improve your hormone production, your hormonal metabolism, or your balance.

We often rely on the tenet that food should be medicine and medicine should also be food, And that never comes truer than when you're thinking about hormone balance.

When we're starting to think about hormones balance, there's a few things we need to consider. First, you need think of your liver. Why? Because the liver, as you might know, is responsible for processing toxins.

but your liver also is responsible for processing all of your hormones.

How the liver processes hormones

And the way that the liver does this is through different enzymes, which use vitamins, minerals, and plant chemicals that are present in many of you brightly colored fruits and vegetables.

So you want to be supporting your lever to able to manage your hormone, because it's your livers that decides which hormones to keep in circulation and which ones to get rid of.

Once your liver decides that you have an excess of a hormone such as estrogen, it will change it in a way that it can be eliminated in your urine through your kidneys or it's delivered to your gut where it is eliminated and stool.

As long as you're not constipated and as long you the right probiotics present in you gut. If you don't have the probiotic to change those hormones like estrogen and testosterone or if you are chronically constepated those hormones will get recirculated back into your system.

And that's one of the causes of estrogen dominance. So when you're thinking about what your liver needs, it needs cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts.

These are very important in helping the liver identify excess estrogen and process that estrogen. Your liver also needs phytoestrogens that are in flax seeds and chia seeds.

to help moderate your estrogen levels. It also gets a lot of support from beta-carotene foods, magnesium, and lycopene, that red pigment that's in watermelon and tomatoes.

Gut health, fiber, and probiotics

And then remember, once those hormones go through your liver, they get delivered to your gut. So you also wanna make sure you're eating in a way that supports gut health.

Making sure your getting enough fiber, which for most adults is around 30 grams a day. But for women that are in perimenopause and need extra support in this area, Our goal is often 40 grams of fiber per day.

You also need probiotics, those good lactobacillus and bifidobacteria that help to change your hormones so that they can't be reabsorbed and cause any dominance issues.

Orange foods and green foods are also really helpful for your soothing your colon and preventing constipation. And it's always helpful to have a diet that's lower in sugar.

So before we get into the specific foods that I use with my patients, I'll share a patient's story. Donna came to me at age 54 and she was having some menopausal gut issues.

She was still having her periods every month, but they were heavier and they are longer. Then they started to come every three months or six months. So that was very unpredictable, especially an issue for her because she had intense, severe cramps with her period, lots of abdominal pain.

severe constipation during PMS that also led to bowel blockages.

Donnau2019s perimenopause case study

She found out that she had surgical adhesions a lot in her gut from past surgeries, but these adhessions also made it necessary for her to have future surgeries to remove the adhesion.

It was very stressful for here to not know when she was going to be getting her period because the symptoms were so severe and it often sent her into the emergency room.

we were able to approach this with nutrition. Because she was perimenopausal and going into menopause, we thought that she would only be having periods for a couple more years.

So we focused on stress management so that her gut was moving more efficiently. We balanced her stress hormones and we also used herbs and many foods to help prevent constipation and boost her progesterone levels.

Once we're able Diet changes figured out she only needed one more surgery before she entered menopause. The periods got a little lighter and less painful and she no longer ended up in the emergency room.

So what are the foods that we added in Donna's diet? Well, one of the first ones was ground flaxseed. As I already mentioned, flex seeds, hemp hearts, and chia seeds are high in phytoestrogens.

But sometimes we hear the word phytoestrogen and we think that it's going to increase our estrogen levels and cause further problems if we're estrogen dominant.

But that's not really the case.

Phytoestrogens and hormone-supportive foods

Phydoestrogens, if they attach to your cells before your own estrogen gets there, they have a weaker signal so they can help to temper some of the issues with having too much estrogen.

Soy is also a phytostrogen. and has that similar action with moderating your own estrogen levels to protect yourselves. But also having lots of beans, which are high in magnesium and soluble fiber is an important part of balancing your hormones in perimenopause and menopaus.

A lot of people don't realize that green peas are actually in this family as well and provide many of the benefits of other beans such as phytoestrogens, fiber, and protein.

The next food that we focused on is actually a drink, green tea. You may be familiar with the benefits of green te being promoted as breast cancer prevention.

And part of the reason is the EGCG compound in green Tea helps the liver metabolize estrogen better. So having one or two cups of Green Tea daily is a good idea to balance your hormones.

Some of foods that women don't know that can really be really helpful in helping their liver balance their hormones are artichokes, beets, and leafy greens.

Green tea, cruciferous vegetables, and beta-carotene foods

Particularly I like artachokes and beats for this because they help to release bile and to support your gallbladder and liver to make bile. Bile is really important in making our hormones more soluble and it's particularly helpful in balancing estrogen and testosterone levels.

Now we'll get to some of the famous foods for hormone balance, the cruciferous. And I'd like to bring these into two groups. the leafy cruciferous, which are radicchio, arugula, and kale.

And I'll call them solid crucifers, which are like broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, Brussels sprouts. You want to be having one of each of these group a day to help manage your hormone levels but also provide lots of good fiber to keep you regular.

These vegetables, particularly radicchio and cabbage, are chock full of prebiotics, which are those special types of fiber that help boost our probiotic health.

So that's a double reason to eat cruciferous on a daily basis. The last food that was really helpful for Donna in particular were foods that were high in beta carotene.

Remember I mentioned that the liver likes to have beta-carotene and the reason is it really helps to boost progesterone levels and helps the livers manage progeterones levels.

So these foods that are high in beta caroten, pumpkin, butternut squash, kabocha squash sweet potato, carrots and yams are really helpful to eat when you have PMS and also all through perimenopause to help support your progenitor levels to prevent constipation, help calm the gut and reduce water retention and bloating.

To learn more about my practice and how you can balance your hormones with nutrition, download my free hormone balancing recipe guide on my website, drmandatracy.com slash guide.