Herb Your Enthusiasm: Plant Medicine for Hormone Support Part 1 Transcript

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Herbs for PCOS Hormone Balance

I have seen herbs actually do really well with treating PCOS. So let's get into that. With PCOS, you are usually seeing a low progesterone picture. So we're going to use the same things we've been talking about to push the progesterone.

I commonly see low estradiol in PCOS. more so than in the other conditions. So I usually am trying to increase both in this case. And that being said, when you have PCOS, you usually have high testosterone or high androgens.

And so you're wanting to decrease those. Do you feel like your hormones have turned against you? Trust us, you're not alone. We're Dr. Serena and Dr. Heidi, and on Hormone Heroines, we explore all the root causes that are behind hormone imbalances, and we teach you how to thrive through them.

Join us for real talk, expert tips, and even a few laughs. We were just recently guest speakers at a university and talking to students about herbs and how they go with hormones and what we can do with herbs to help support hormonal dysregulation issues.

So we thought, what better way to get it out there even more than do it on our podcast? So that's what we're going to talk about today. We're going to go through some of the major things that we see like PMS, PMDD, perimenopause, menopause, postpartum, pregnancy.

We'll go over some of those. This isn't medical advice. This is just kind of going over an overview of what herbs we use with our patients and what work in these kinds of situations.

You want to start with PMS? Yeah, let's start with PMS. Okay. Probably one of the most common conditions. PMS, the classic pattern that we see with the hormone dysregulation is often like an estrogen dominance with low progesterone.

That's the most common. And then After that, it's usually low estrogen and low progesterone. I'd say most of the hormonal dysregulation stuff we deal with are those patterns, not just PMS, but pretty much all of them.

Yeah, but those are the most common patterns, so then what herbs would we use to address those? Let's talk about estrogen dominance first. So with estrogen dominance, usually with like lab testing, you're going to see estradiol is going to be high.

And then if you run an Estrone, Estrone might also be high.

Podcast Intro and Herb Overview

Estrone is like the more inflammatory estrogen that we don't like very much. Estrodial is the one we want, but when there's too much of it, It causes a lot of those symptoms like the breast tenderness, heavy bleeding.

Really bad cramping. Yeah, really bad cramping. Swings. All of those things. So when that is too high, when estradiol is too high, that's what it contributes to.

And then with estrone also playing in the mix, that also like gives the hint that it's more inflammatory and you're not processing your estrogen super well.

You're not detoxing really well. Yeah. So to address that herbally, one, you can use herbs to help your liver detox your hormones and some of my favorite for that are going to be like dandelion and burdock.

So those are kind of things that we would do to support the liver. Methylated B vitamins also because methylated B vitamins are most a lot of people can't methylate.

So methylated B vitamins also help to take care of the extra estrogens and help detox helps the liver detox them out. Yeah, so that would be one aspect of the treatment plan is to support the liver when you want to help clear estrogens out or push away from an estrone to an estradiol pitcher.

Also with dim. Yeah. DIM and indole-3-carbinol are some other ones that are really good. DIM is from broccoli, for those that you don't know, or like brass, because in general.

So you can also just try to eat more of those as a healthy… Which is also good fiber, and good fiber helps you sweep out all that stuff, too. Yeah. Well, good fiber also supports good production of beta-glucuronidase in your GI tract.

So just some fun facts on how to better regulate your hormones in daily life, even if you're not doing it verbally.

PMS and Estrogen Dominance

Okay, moving on to supporting progesterone in PMS. To be honest, there's a lot more herbs available for regulating overall hormones or supporting estradiol or estrogens than there is for progesterone.

Even though we see more low progesterone and progesterone issues, than anything else, but herbally there's not as many available for that. So there's kind of your classics, which is going to be sarsaparilla, wild yam, vitex, evening primrose oil, and then maca, but you have to be specific about your macas and I'll let you take that one.

Yeah, so if you are going to use maca to do female hormones, you want to use the red maca. The cream maca is kind of like, eh, it doesn't really do that much.

I haven't had that great of success with it. And the black maca is typically for men. So that's typically to raise their androgens and to have their hormones more in balance.

The red maca is really what you want to use for women or people with female anatomy. Yes, the classic herbs to support progesterone and they do, I do think they work really well.

However, there's a couple of caveats to that. One of the biggest issues that I see is people don't dose herbs high enough or often enough. That being said, you shouldn't do this on your own.

You should do this under guidance from a doctor who actually knows herbal medicine because if you're on other medications, these herbs can 100% interact with those other meds and affect their efficacy or just it can cause liver issues, kidney issues, all those kinds of things.

So you don't want to do this on your own. So don't just like, oh, I'm going to go just take more of these herbs and that'll do the trick. That's not the case, but just in my experience, if you're like, oh, I've been to a doctor and we've tried these before.

It might have been because you weren't dosing often enough or high enough and you should probably get another opinion from another doctor who's more versed in herbs.

That being said, evening primrose oil I want to point out specifically because I find that one does really well at pushing progesterone. However, that one is one that's dosed in my opinion too low.

Yeah, all the time Yeah, because we're using it really to push as like a fatty acid that supports like, you know, the nutrients building blocks Yeah production of it and so to do that when you're low usually you have to start off with a higher higher dose and it's a fatty acid and that's why it's pushing that.

Yeah. And most of us are kind of deficient in our good healthy fatty acids. So that's why I think dosing is often too low with that. And then also to talk about Vitex, which is chaste tree berry.

That is my other like most favorite herb for pushing progesterone. But it also has good balancing effects between estrogen and progesterone, but it is more specifically for pushing progesterone, but it also helps balance the estrogen.

So those are kind of like The list I gave you are my favorite progesterone pushing herbs, but Vitex and evening primrose oil are probably like my top two.

Yeah, I think we should talk a little bit about wild yam because I do like wild yam. I do like wild yam, but taking wild yam is not like taking progesterone just because you've probably heard hormone replacement therapy, bioidentical hormone replacement therapy is derived from wild yam.

Does not mean taking wild yam is like taking bioidentical progesterone. That's not how it works. It works in its own way, herbally, to help support progesterone production.

But if you just take like the whole herb, you're not just taking progesterone, even though you can synthesize progesterone from that herb. Yeah. You know how us women are always just pushing through it, and then when we go to find help, we're often not taken seriously or told, oh, that's just part of being a woman.

Yeah, we've lived through it, prioritizing everybody else and then our own health falls to the wayside. That's why we started blossoming longevity by women or women.

We created programs that meet women where they are, addressing the root causes and all of the struggles that come with every stage of life. Like our vitality program.

It reconnects you with your youth and your life so that you can thrive through the years. And with Clarity, we go beyond the skin to restore your health, clear your complexion so you can feel radiant from the inside out.

Supporting Progesterone Naturally

With our Silhouette program, we help you reclaim your strength, optimize your metabolism and your body composition so that you can feel great in your body again.

And with Harmony, we help you rebalance your hormones to heal from within so you can feel vibrant and ready to take on the world. That is why it's time to stop saddling and start flourishing.

Visit blossominglongevity.com today. Let's talk about PMDD. So for those of you who don't know, PMDD is premenstrual dysphoric disorder. So this is kind of like PMS on steroids.

PMS is some mild mood swings or irritability, maybe some headaches right before your period, a little bit of feeling down or tired, some tender breasts, that kind of stuff.

PMDD is that times 10 to 100. It is severe mood swings that completely interfere with your life. Well, to the point of psychosis. It can cause such severe mood swings that you may need to be hospitalized.

The MDD is a very severe condition that people can suffer from. Yes, it's on a spectrum, but it can go all the way to needing to be hospitalized during those episodes.

And it is instead of just like some normal headaches, it could be very bad migraines. Usually it's like two weeks before your period instead of just a week.

That being said, it's a lot more severe than PMS. Yes. But getting into treatment for it, we should make a caveat that herbs alone are not going to be sufficient to manage this condition.

Yes. But they can be used adjunctively. So let's talk about it in that context. Yeah, so with PMDD, especially, I go with the heavier hitters. I do a lot more mood support.

I use a lot of adaptogens, especially like rhodiola, glyceriza, or licorice. Those ones are huge. With PMDD, what we usually see is a higher swing in between the estrogen and progesterone.

So they still may have a lower estradiol, but their progesterone is usually really, really low. So they still have that huge gap and they're not in balance.

The ratio between progesterone and estradiol is really important for what does and doesn't cause symptoms in all of these conditions. So for PMDD, it's that estradiol swing without the support of the progesterone to tamper down those effects that is causing most of these really severe symptoms.

That being said, again, Supporting progesterone to try and increase progesterone is huge. I will just make a comment that biogenic hormone replacement therapy can be super beneficial with some oral micronized progesterone or if you want to go the compounded route the One derived from wild yam can be really beneficial, but bioidentical progesterone is hugely beneficial in people with PMDD.

I've used it a lot, and I use it with herbs, too. You don't have to do one or the other. You can do both. And a lot of times with PMDD and PCOS and stuff that's heavy or hitting, you need more than one thing.

And the micronized progesterone can make people feel like themselves again. can really damper down the severity of the mood symptoms because progesterone can have gabinergic effects.

And GABA is the neurotransmitter in your brain that says, just calm the F down honestly. I don't even know what else to say. I love it. It's like chill out and then you feel better because you feel calmer.

And when progesterone has similar effects because it can activate those same receptors as GABA in the brain, that's why it's so beneficial. It is definitely our calming hormone.

So that's why pushing progesterone is so important in PMDD. Again, the herbs for that are going to be your sarsaparilla, wild yam, vitex, evening primrose oil, and the red maca.

That being said, when estradiol is that high, you usually want to try and lower it.

PMDD and Mood Support

And again, one of the best ways to do that is to use things like DIM, indole-3-carbinol. Other ways to approach PMDD and also PMS is you can use herbs to support mood.

So things to help support serotonin are going to be your St. John's wort. Although, again, I caution you on this one, that interacts with almost all medications, so this is why you need a doctor.

Also, if you want to push GABA, Valerian will do that. Valerian is like an herbal benzo. Valerian has the same chemical pathways as benzodiazepine medications because those cause GABA to increase and so does valerian now obviously valerian is not as strong yeah it's not going to be quite the same but if you're trying to Chill out.

Malarian is one of the best herbs for that because it will increase the GABA availability and help you calm down. So those are some of the good herbal mood supports.

Adaptogens. Definitely rhodiola. Yeah, rhodiola is my favorite. I know everyone talks about ashwagandha and all that, but realistically I don't use it a lot in women.

because it has androgenic effects, excuse me, meaning it can drive testosterone production. Yeah, ashwagandha classically in Ayurvedic medicine is the adaptogen that they use for men and licorice is the adaptogen they use for

women.

And, you know, I'm not trying to go against thousands of years of herbal practice. And so I usually just kind of listen to them. But I have seen, particularly when we get into PCOS, I have seen when using ashwagandha really did not work because it can aggravate those Adrenergic effects and drive a testosterone pathway and as women, you know, we don't really want extra hair growth or Not that kind of hair growth.

Yeah, or Or hair or hair loss those types of things. So unless I'm trying to push Testosterone, I usually lean more towards licorice when I'm looking for an adaptogen for women How about PCOS?

Okay, PCOS. This one's fun. PCOS, it's a really hard thing to treat. I don't think Western medicine or what we're typically offered really does the trick or really addresses any of the underlying problems.

You're just told to here's some birth control. I just feel like conventionally there's not a lot of great options for PCOS and I have seen herbs actually do really well with treating PCOS.

So let's get into that. Again, with PCOS, you are usually seeing a low progesterone picture. So we're going to use the same things we've been talking about to push the progesterone.

That being said, I commonly see low estradiol in PCOS more so than in the other conditions. So I usually am trying to increase Both in this case. And that being said, when you have PCOS, you usually have high testosterone or high androgens, and so you're wanting to decrease those.

So let's break it down by each one. PCOS again with the really irregular cycles, I usually like to use something called the biphasic tincture, meaning in the first half of your cycle, so like if you had a normal cycle, a 28-day cycle, you would want to push typically estradiol herbs or hormone balancing herbs in the first phase, so the first 14 days.

And my favorite ones for that are going to be like red clover, false unicorn, angelica, licorice, hops, schisandra, donkwai, and I also will put ginkgo in there as well.

Anyways, I won't use all of those in one tincture, but those are just the favorites. Those are my favorite like estrogen pushing herbs. I also use shasabari.

Yes. Chashavari is a really good one too. A lot of those herbs on that list are also phytoestrogens. So it's actually providing you a version of estrogens to help support that pathway.

Red clover is really well known for that. The plant makes its own hormones. That's what phytoestrogen means. So when the plant has its hormones and it's really similar to estrogen, you can use those in your body to help drive your own or raise those estradiol pathways and have some receptor activity from them.

The phase two is going to be the herbs that we talked about before the progesterone. So the sarsaparilla, wild yam, bitex, eating primrose oil, and the red maca.

PCOS Treatment Strategies

So that's the biphasic tincture to try and regulate cycles, push the estradiol and progesterone a way that's going to hopefully regulate the cycle a little bit more.

Because in the first part of your cycle, your estradiol is really coming up. And then in the second half of your cycle, you have like a big peak of progesterone around ovulation.

Then it kind of comes down and technically you have another little peak of estradiol in there. later, but when you're using a biphasic t-shirt, it's usually like, okay, let's really try and increase the estradiol, and then let's really try and increase the progesterone, and then when you pull both hormones away, that's what typically causes the bleeds.

That's why you want to use those in the biphasic. Yep. Let's also talk about how we want to low testosterone because with PCOS you have higher androgens.

So you have higher testosterone and that's what's causing the hirsutism, which is like the chin hair, the mustache, like cystic acne or hair like male pattern balding, those kinds of things.

Um, let's talk about the herbs that we can do to kind of reduce the testosterone. So like spearmint tea has been used. Licorice is actually a mild anti-androgen and it's also really good for an adaptogen for women.

So that one increases your estradiol. So that one's a really good one. Licorice is great. Not red vines, but actual licorice fruit with a little caveat.

If you have high blood pressure, talk to your doctor about it because it can increase blood pressure. But it's great for all three of those things. And in PCOS especially, you need all of those things.

Also, other herbs that decrease testosterone is saw palmetto. It can be really beneficial. I mean, side note, it can also be beneficial at treating male pattern baldness in males because it decreases the more active metabolite of testosterone itself that usually causes all the issues that we don't like.

So, saw palmetto, spearmint, and licorice are good anti-angiinergic herbs. But also, one of my favorite combos is white kidney and licorice in PCOS because it has the anti-angiinergic.

Oh my gosh. And those two herbs together also drive hormonal balance as well as have the phytoestrogen effect. That being said, licorice is classically used as a synergistic herb, so it's often put into many hormone formulas Going on to other aspects of treating PCOS, because PCOS also comes with a lot of metabolic issues.

So, herbs to help with metabolic issues, like decreasing insulin resistance, it's going to be, berberine is huge. Yep, berberine is huge. And to be specific, dihydroberberine, which is the constituents that's actually active, now they've actually finally come out with just dihydroberberine.

So, you can take less of it, have less of the side effects like the diarrhea, the gas, and the bloating. it does work, it lowers your blood sugar, it works with insulin sensitivity.

Yeah, so it's really great at helping the metabolic aspect of PCOS. Again, because it does lower blood sugar, you want to do this under guidance from a doctor.

That being said, other nutraceuticals that are really good for supporting the metabolic aspect is going to be your inositol. So inositol, there is two different kinds.

You have your myoinositol, which is more of like ovarian food, like it just like really supports ovarian health. And then you have your D-chiral inositol, which is really great for supporting metabolism.

And so that is, so those two together are really great for PCOS because you're trying to nourish the ovaries that are under basically like stress from various aspects of the condition.

And then the metabolism, you have the D-chiral. Usually you want a 40 to 1, so you want a lot more myelinositol than you want of the D-chiral inositol.

So 40 to 1 is the ratio that I usually use. And there's some great medical grade products out there that have the mix that we like. Also, the other big thing that I like to bring up in treating PCOS is green tea.

Green tea is great at boosting your sex hormone binding globulin, which in my experience, you would think like, oh, you don't want it to bind up your progesterone and your estradiol.

I really haven't seen it do that, but I have seen when you increase it, it binds up more of the testosterone. So drink

as much spearmint green tea as you want.

um for for those purposes anyway so um but also just actually taking green tea because you can't necessarily always drink enough to get that to happen on a biochemical pathway without supplementing but who doesn't like to have a good green tea yeah anyways especially like mint green tea that just sounds good experiment yeah um also other aspect of treating pcos is stress so we really use a lot of adaptogens when treating pcos because PCOS is one of those conditions where you really need to address the gut, the metabolism, the hormones, and guess what?

Stress impacts all of those. So you need to address the stress response, stress regulation. So we don't get into all of that. But herbally, my favorite combo is licorice and rhodiola.

Combining those is like a really great way to deal with. The, I am feeling low energy. I just can't get going. I'm like tired all the time. So those are the adaptogens that I use for that picture.

If I'm trying to lower cortisol because there have been really high cortisol, then I'm going to use something like Ninoleobark because that actually brings down cortisol levels.

And I know there's lots of research about ashwagandha and how it can bring down cortisol levels, but in PCOS, if it has the ability to push testosterone, that is when I would definitely not be using ashwagandha.

I also use phosphatidylserine. It helps to get you out of that fight or flight until the next horrible thing happens and you go into fight or flight again.

But that's a really good one. And it helps with calming sleep too, because sleep is huge in regards to its hormone balancing. If you do not get good sleep, your hormones are all out of whack.

And so if you're not getting sleep, you're not repairing, your body's not resting, and you're having higher cortisol when you're not sleeping. So it throws everything off because they all feed off of each other.

Going back to green tea though. is then L-theanine is also really great. So L-theanine comes from green tea and it's also another really great calming, fill-out kind of supplement that you can take.

So that can fit into that pitcher along with the whole decreasing inflammation and all the other aspects we talk about benefits of green tea. So like we said, Herbs are really great adjunctive.

Closing Thoughts and Outro

There can be enough with some of the more mild symptoms, but as symptoms increase, they're usually particularly used as adjunctive medical treatment, not solely for many of the conditions that we discussed, and that you should always consult a trained doctor who is also trained in herbs before trying any of these out on your own, but we wanted to share with you different ones that we have used in our practice with our patients and the ones that we've seen actually provide benefit because there's a lot of information out there about different herbs that can be helpful for different things and these are the ones that we have seen and been more tried and true.

So hope this is informational and helpful to you, and we'll see you next week. Bye. Bye. Thanks for watching Hormone Heroines. If this episode spoke to you, follow the show and share it with someone who also needs to hear it.

And write a review. That helps more people find their way back to balance. See you next week.