Hormone Changes in Perimenopause

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What I like to say it does is it's like those, you know, the carlots that have those balloons that go like this. That is what your hormones look like in perimenopause.

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.

Do you want to talk about postpartum? Yeah, let's talk about postpartum since you're getting close there. I know. Yeah. Okay. Postpartum, biggest reason why you are having mood disturbances is because you had the highest physiological level of hormones that you're ever going to have in your life.

While you're pregnant. And then they tanked in like… 24 to 72 hours after getting birth and now you have no hormones. Yeah, you're basically like in menopause almost.

Yeah, it's like you go from your highest high to your lowest low in a matter of hours and it messes with you. Well, and while not getting any sleep while trying to feed and keep a new human alive that you have no idea how to do you know most of the time.

Podcast Intro and Herb Overview

Trying to do all the things that you have to do if you have other kids you're having to you know take care of them too so it's like you basically lost all of your supporting factors in your body but you're still supposed to thrive.

So you're under a ton of stress you're probably a little bit depleted from like nutritionally and like sleep. Yeah sleep is messed up. You're not going to get a lot of sleep.

All those things are going on but I don't think we appreciate how drastic the drop in hormones is and we've talked about how severe PMDD symptoms can be just from that drastic change.

Well it is an even more drastic change when you are going from pregnancy to the postpartum period and that is why so many women have those. And then the other aspect of that is why it lasts.

So you could surmise from what we've been talking about that, oh, why don't women more often have a major psychosis episode than if it's so drastic right there?

Well, luckily we get a little bit of oxytocin. Luckily we have some oxytocin on board that's keeping us a little bit calmer. A little bit sane. Yeah, that's like our saving grace with the oxytocin at that point that's just like, you know, making us feel a little bit more lovey because that's also the highest oxytocin that you're ever going to have in your life.

So that is like the saving grace. That is probably why we don't see more women like have a psychotic episode right after that big crash. We do see that though.

We do see that, but I'm seeing that's why we probably don't see more of that is because of the aquitocin. But perspartum drags on for a lot longer than those few days and your hormones do not come up.

Well, especially if you're breastfeeding. So if you're breastfeeding, your estrogen and progesterone need to stay low because your prolactin needs to come up.

So prolactin is what tells your body to make milk. So if your estrogen and progesterone are up higher, your prolactin is going to be lower. They just play off of each other.

So that's why those are so low.

Postpartum Mood Support

And then if you are breastfeeding, if you're able to breastfeed it and you do continue breastfeeding if you want to, it's going to stay lower that whole time because it has to in order for your body to get the signal to make milk.

That being said, if you're breastfeeding, it limits the herb that you can use. Yes. Mostly just because there's not enough research out there. Yes, but we are cautious in our approach to such treatment.

Really one of the biggest things to do is to support progesterone in that period. I see a lot more benefit in treating postpartum mood disturbances by trying to increase progesterone and using like nervine herbs or like calming herbs more so than honestly than using a lot of your SSRIs.

Not saying there isn't a place for SSRIs or some women don't need them, but I have just seen a lot of my patients are on the SSRI and it's not doing anything for their postpartum and disturbances and what does more for those patients is trying to support their progesterone levels And so, herbally, one of my favorite ones to do is, again, the evening primrose oil because that's also using it more as a nutraceutical to push the progesterone.

And oftentimes, that mixed with things like lemon balm and catnip. Actually, shotivari is really good for that one, too, and it is safe in breastfeeding.

Yeah. And it is phytoestrogenic, but it's not enough to push your prolactin down. So it's not going to ruin that balance that you need to have to keep your breast milk going.

It actually is an amenogog, too. It helps. It helps with it. Yeah. So chatavari is a good one. If I'm going to do a teen here, it's going to be like evening primrose oil with some of the, what we call, nervine herbs.

So like your passion flower, your lavender, your lemon balm. Yeah, I won't use lemon balm if they're having hypothyroid. A lot of times you can have postpartum thyroiditis, which also contributes to depression and anxiety and other things.

Let's not get on that whole tangent though. Let's focus on this. So again, you need to be with a practitioner that knows herbs. But like I said, the nerve ions with supporting progesterone usually do.

really well. But I really think it's because you're supporting progesterone and going back to the benefits of using some bioidentical hormone replacement therapy, you can use low dose bioidentical progesterone to help with the postpartum mood disturbances.

And you always counsel that this may impact milk supply, but you have to weigh that how severe are the mood disturbances and are you willing to potentially risk the change in milk supply with that.

But it usually does. It works so well, honestly. Well, and generally speaking, progesterone doesn't affect the milk supply. It's more of the estradiol that does.

We still counsel about it. But what I have seen is progesterone especially works amazing for people who are having those intrusive thoughts. And that extreme anxiety, for no reason, I've had patients where they are so scared to take their babies outside because it might have a raindrop on it that gets it sick somehow.

Stuff that they know is not correct, but they can't help the anxiety behind it. And so that kind of intrusive thoughts or that kind of like extreme anxiety progesterone, micronized oral progesterone really works well.

And if you want to do even like lower dose, there is the transdermal progesterone cream. Progesterone cream made from the wild yam that you can use. And like you said, we counsel that it could impact breast milk supply.

However, when you're using it in that lower dose, it's pretty unlikely. Well, and studies have shown that progesterone in and of itself alone doesn't really affect the breast milk.

It's more that estradiol that does. Moving on, what's the next one you want to cover? Perimenopause. 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.

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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. That one's hard, let's just be honest. Herbs only go so far in perimenopause, to be honest.

Perimenopause Herbs and Symptom Relief

If your ovaries are like, I'm not making hormones, then herbs to support hormone production are not necessarily gonna make your ovaries turn back the clock.

That's just not how they work. I have seen herbs work for symptomatic control, giving some relief, but they are definitely not a magic bullet in perimenopause.

No because like your your ovaries were set to be done at a certain time and in perimenopause your ovaries are kind of just like shutting down and not working as much so they're not going to solve everything but they are great for some there are some great ones for symptomatic things so like for hot flashes there's black cohosh For low libido, there is shatavari.

Shatavari is an Ayurvedic herb and a loose translation of it is like woman of a thousand husbands or something like

that. It definitely increases libido, but it's also phytoestrogenic, so it gives you a little bit more of that energy.

I love herbs and they are great for certain times. Earlier in perimenopause, yes, they definitely really help. When you get to the point where I'm at right now, they did not help anymore.

My ovaries are just like, peace out, I'm good, I'm almost done, leave me alone. You can't support me enough to make me do my work. I definitely am on bioidentical hormones, but for some of the other things you can, especially early on.

Yeah, early on, I mean, if you're having a lot of the, like, anxiety that comes up, we've already talked about, like, valerian, cava, lemon balm, lavender, skull cap, like, you can also use the St.

John's War because it is going to increase your serotonin. So those can be helpful for the mood stuff. I've actually found California poppy works really good in midlife women.

Yeah, I was also going to say, I was going to come back to that one. Oh, sorry. No, you're good. Yes, that one can help really a lot with mood. But I was also going to mention that for circling back to like, if you are having painful periods, whether that's in premenopause or any other time, my favorite combination of herbs is going to be cramp bark, valerian, kava, and california poppy.

That is because cramp bark is specific for spasmodic pain in the uterus. Valerian, yes it is calming and it like is going to make you calm down but it also is really great for spasmodic pain.

It's a nerdine. Yes, yeah it's also really great for spasmodic pain which is what cramps are. And so is kava. Again, kava is one of those that can make you drowsy.

So like maybe don't just like take these and be like, I'm gonna go drive right now. But yeah, kava is really good for spasmodic pain as well. So those are like the heavy hitters to treat spasmodic pain.

And the reason why I always throw in California poppy in there is because it's kind of a great synergist, but it also works on pain and it works on the central nervous system.

So it actually blocks the pain signals to your brain. So that's why I like to throw that one in there. and as like you can have painful periods anytime in your life but a lot of times when you're getting into perimenopause you start having more heavy painful periods and so I like that combo of herbs to help manage that symptom.

Again because progesterone is usually the first one to go and if you've got even just a regular normal estradiol and you have hardly any progesterone, the estradiol is going to grow your uterine lining too much and without the progesterone to block those effects of it, then you're going to have more uterine tissue to get rid of, hence the more bleeding and the more cramping.

And on the note of heavy bleeding, some really good herbs are shepherd's purse and yarrow. So that way you can try and reduce the amount of how much you're bleeding at once.

I mean, you're still going to have to shed that lining, but hopefully it won't be so heavy and dramatic with some of those herbs. So you can throw that into that tincture.

Yeah. So those are some herbs to manage that aspect of perimenopause. What we have seen most commonly is progesterone tends to decline first in perimenopause.

So estrogen is the fun little roller coaster of perimenopause that's just like, I'm going to be high, I'm going to be low. And it just goes like this until it's done.

No, what I like to say it does is it's like those, you know, the carlots that have those balloons that go like this. That is what your hormones look like in perimenopause.

That is what estradiol looks like in perimenopause. Progesterone is usually just like this. Yeah, it's usually more like it starts here and it's just like I'm just quietly quitting right now.

So you usually see that one taper off first and then the estradiol is kind of doing what it wants. So going back to supporting progesterone in perimenopause and using those herbs is really important as well.

But also when you're supporting perimenopause, you want to use a lot more of those phytoestrogen herbs. So instead of doing like a biphasic tincture, you might just do a tincture that has all those phytoestrogenic herbs that we talked about like licorice, red clover, peony, those types of things.

Shatavari. Shatavari. And then also combine it with the progesterone supporting herbs. And because you're not really concerned about fertility at this point in most cases, you don't need to do the biphasic.

You're just trying to support those hormones and get them as stable as possible. So that is usually a go-to for that. Yeah. You know what we skipped over?

What? Labor. We should talk about labor. I mean, you're almost there. We should refresh before you get there.

Pregnancy and Labor Herb Support

Yeah. Well, labor and pregnancy. Obviously, you would need a trained midwife and herbalist and doctor for any of this. So this is just kind of like what we've learned and what we've used and done.

Yeah, I mean, for mood support in pregnancy, I use going back to a lot of lemon balm, just because for me, I get a lot of the anxiety where it's just like…

It is very calming. I don't think I'm anxious, but my body feels anxious. So that's the… I'll usually use lemon balm, catnip, lavender. Those are kind of my favorites for that.

And they're also safe during pregnancy. I have used California poppy in pregnancy to deal with like the Braxton Hicks. Also, if you didn't know that sometimes when you're pregnant and then you have an orgasm.

It can cause really painful cramping afterwards because your uterus is like stretched, doesn't know what's happening. And then because an orgasm is a lot of rapid contraction of the uterus, it can actually lead to really like painful brachs and hicks contractions.

And cornea poppy can be really helpful for that. So yeah, that was a good one. Personal experience there. Yeah. Which ones do you want to add? Oats in pregnancy is really good because they're very nutritive and you are very depleted in pregnancy.

I don't care if you eat the perfect diet or anything like that, you're going to be depleted because the baby is taking all of it. Um, you're left with the leftovers, which is fine, but you know, you still need to have some.

Um, I definitely like Passiflora, Red Raspberry, obviously to get your uterus all ready. Yeah. Passiflora is more for the mood stuff. Yes, for calming.

Whereas red raspberry leaf is also more of that nutritive. It has the minerals and stuff, so it's used generally for prepping the uterus or priming the uterus.

So drinking red raspberry leaf tea is really beneficial as you go through your pregnancy. I use a lot more nutraceuticals in pregnancy to be honest, just to support the nutrition aspect of the herbs because there's a lot of herbs that are like the lack of research is the problem.

um but during labor caveat to this is you need medical care yes during labor you should not rely on herbs to manage these things but going back to heavy bleeding you can use shepherd's persignaro if you're having bleeding

after labor weighty's mantle is also really good yeah in the postpartum period you can use those as well um to try and reduce that bleeding because you know you don't just bleed right after labor you bleed for a few weeks after that yeah you get to have a three to four week period yeah so those are some herbs I would use but yeah in general you have a hospital birth they're not gonna allow for that so that's really only for people who have a basically like a verbally trained midwife who's doing an at-home or birth center birth yeah and make sure that they are trained before you.

Like a licensed naturopathic doctor with a midwifery license as well. That would be someone I would recommend. Yes. Anyways, so like we said, herbs are really great adjunctive.

Closing Advice 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.

A lot of TikToks. Yeah 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.