



Naturopathic News

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"Naturopathic News"?*

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www.pillarsofhealth.ca*

Dr. Jennifer Salib Huber is available for complementary 15-minute consultations if you would like learn more about Naturopathic Medicine.

Focus on Women's Health: Understanding Estrogen

March 8th is International Women's Day, and in honour of this I've decided to focus this issue of 'Naturopathic News' on the issues important to women's health.

Estrogens are the dominant hormones for most of woman's reproductive life. Starting at puberty, the ovaries produce estrogen (*estrone and estradiol*) until menopause. Estrone (E1) and estradiol (E2) are considered "strong" estrogens, whereas estriol (E3) is a "weak" or "protective" estrogen. High levels of E1 and E2 are associated with increased breast, uterine and ovarian cancer risk, whereas E3 is associated with decreased risk.

E3 is not produced directly, but is produced in the liver during the breakdown of E1 and E2. Improving liver function can help assist this conversion.

Estrogen Metabolites

Estrogen is broken down by enzymes in the liver, then secreted into the bile, intestines and eventually excreted into stool.

During the breakdown process, several metabolites are formed: C2 (good) estrogens are harmless. However, C16 (bad) and C4 (ugly) estrogen metabolites are harmful and carcinogenic. The C4 pathway is activated by pesticides, environmental estrogens, dioxin, car exhaust, paint fumes, alcohol, caffeine, pharmaceuticals, sugar, a high-fat diet, fried or rancid fats and inadequate protein.

While this all sounds like bad news, the good news is that one the C4 estrogens are made, they can be inactivated in the liver. The brassica plant family (cabbage, broccoli, brussel sprouts and kale) contain a chemical called indole-3-carbinol that decreases the production of C4 and C16 metabolites. As this phytochemical is sensitive to heat, these foods should be eaten raw or lightly steamed.

Testing for Metabolites

A simple urine test, done through a private US lab can tell us the ratio of C2:C16 metabolites, as they are excreted in the urine. Women with a personal or family history of breast or uterine cancer may wish to look into this. This is a useful test to use when monitoring estrogen dominant conditions as well. Please inquire for details.

Estrogen Dominance

Many women's health conditions are caused or promoted by excess estradiol (E2), estrone (E1), environmental estrogens, and synthetic estrogens with a relative deficiency of progesterone. This is what we call "estrogen dominance". Other hormone imbalances, such as high or low cortisol and low thyroid function can accompany estrogen dominance.

Conditions commonly associated with estrogen dominance include:

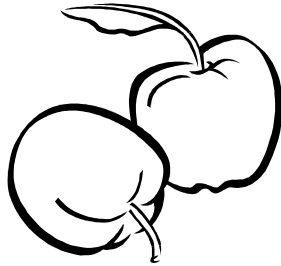
- Breast Cysts
- Breast Cancer
- Uterine Fibroids
- Ovarian Cysts
- Endometriosis
- Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome
- PMS
- Hypothyroidism

As we know, estrogens are normally produced by the ovaries and fat cells. But, we also get estrogens from foods, herbs, animal products, environmental chemicals and synthetic estrogens.

The estrogens we get from food are called "phytoestrogens". These estrogens are weak and protective because they compete for estrogen binding sites with the stronger, more dangerous estrogens. Phytoestrogens are found in: soy, flaxseeds, legumes, mung beans and pumpkin seeds to name a few. Herbs such as turmeric and sheep sorrel are also sources.

Meat, poultry, dairy products and fish may naturally contain estrogen.

Animals may also have been fed or injected with estrogen to increase fat or milk production. Fish may also accumulate environmental estrogens (xenoestrogens) in their fat from environmental sources or pesticide residues. A diet that is high in meat and dairy tends to promote estrogen dominant conditions.



Some xenoestrogens bind to estrogen receptors and mimic estrogen in our bodies, leading to estrogen dominance. These chemicals are present in some pesticides, plastics, petrochemicals, detergents, cosmetics, solvents, chlorinated water, fire retardants, and lice shampoos.

Synthetic estrogens, like those found in birth control pills, fertility drugs and hormone replacement therapies also contribute to estrogen dominance.

While reading all of this may seem dismal, the good news is that you can protect yourself from the harmful effects of estrogen. Diet and lifestyle changes can positively impact on how much you are exposed to and more importantly, how your body handles it.

Principles of Naturopathic Medicine

Naturopathic Medicine is a natural approach to health and healing that recognizes the integrity of the whole person.

1. First Do No Harm

Therapeutic actions should be complementary to and synergistic with the healing process.

2. The Healing Power of Nature

The body has an inherent ability to establish, maintain, and restore health. The healing process is ordered and intelligent; nature heals through the response of the life force.

3. Identify the Cause

Illness does not occur without cause. Symptoms express the body's attempt to heal, but are not the cause of disease. Causes may occur on many levels including physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual.

4. Heal the Whole Person

The harmonious functioning of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects are essential to recovery from and prevention of disease.

5. Doctor as Teacher

A cooperative doctor-patient relationship has inherent therapeutic value. The physician is a catalyst for healthful change, empowering and motivating the patient.

6. Prevention is the Best Cure

The ultimate goal of any health care system should be prevention of disease. This is accomplished through education and promotion of life-habits that create good health.

Balancing Estrogens

In order to help restore estrogen balance, you have to first inventory your sources of estrogen:

Diet

- How often do you eat red meat?
- Do you consume high-fat dairy products?
- Do you eat organic foods whenever possible?

Start by reducing red meat consumption to 1-2x/week, avoid cheeses, ice cream and high-fat dairy products and choose organic foods whenever possible.

Try having at least 2 meatless meals every week. Beans and legumes contain phytoestrogens, which will help to protect your body from stronger, more powerful estrogens and are an excellent source of fibre.

Make a point of having 2 tbsp. of ground flaxseeds every day. Add them to yogurt (fat-free organic), cereal or muffins.

If you drink milk on a regular basis, why not try soy milk instead? Just make sure it's organic, non-GMO (genetically modified) and has no added sugar.

You can also help your liver metabolize estrogen by eating cabbage, broccoli, brussel sprouts and kale on a regular basis. Add turmeric liberally when cooking.

Xenoestrogens

These estrogens are the ones found in our environment, primarily through pesticides, plastics and other chemicals.

Choosing organic foods whenever possible will greatly help to reduce your pesticide exposure. You can start by making fruits and vegetables a priority, especially when you eat the skin. For example, apples have more pesticide residues than bananas.

Plastics contain hormone-disrupting chemicals that can leach into foods and beverages. Leaching increases when plastic comes into contact with oily or fatty foods, during heating and from old or scratched plastic. Generally, the softer the plastic, the more likely it is to leach toxic chemicals.



Looking for a Speaker?

Are you looking for a speaker for your next meeting, lunch 'n learn or event?

Jennifer is available to speak on a variety of topics.

**Please call 464-2225
for details**

Tips for Safer Use of Plastics

1. Avoid using plastic containers in the microwave
2. Don't use "cling wrap", especially in the microwave.
3. Use alternatives to plastic packaging whenever possible.
4. Use Pyrex or ceramic dishes to store foods, especially those with higher-fat content.
5. Don't use Teflon.
6. Avoid plastic bottled water. Remember that bottles from #1 and #2 plastics are for single use only.
7. If you do re-use a plastic water bottle, watch for signs that the plastic is degrading: scratches, cloudiness, etc.

What about baby bottles? To minimize baby's exposure to potentially harmful plastics, avoid using polycarbonate bottles and sippy cups.

Safe alternatives include glass or polyethylene bottles and storage bags.

For an excellent handout on plastics, visit:

www.healthobservatory.org

and click on "Smart Plastics".

The Soy Story

Depending on the day you may hear that soy is good for you, while hear the opposite on another day.

The controversy surrounding soy has to do with the fact that it is a “phytoestrogen”. Some reports have indicated that because it is an “estrogen”, it can increase your total body load of estrogen and increase your risk of hormone-sensitive cancers. But, as was discussed earlier, not all estrogens are created equal. Phytoestrogens are much weaker than even our own body’s estrogens, and dramatically less potent than xenoestrogens. And, because all estrogens compete for the same estrogen receptors, having weaker phytoestrogens floating around is probably a good thing.

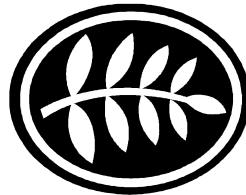
What about breast cancer? There is no evidence that consuming soy as a *food* increases your risk of breast cancer, even if you’ve already been diagnosed. In fact, it may help to prevent against future recurrences.

Soy isoflavone supplements are a bit of a different story. We don’t know the effect of taking soy supplements on health, but based on what we know about phytoestrogens, it’s unlikely that they will find them to be dangerous.

So, the bottom line is that soy, as a food is safe and likely beneficial. But, like most things in life – all things in moderation.

When choosing to include soy in your diet, try to limit processed soy and focus on the food – tofu, soy beans, soy nuts and soy milk.

Soy is one of the foods that is commonly associated with food allergies and sensitivities. Be sure to watch for any signs that you aren’t tolerating it well.



“It’s no coincidence that four of the six letters in health are “heal.””

- Ed Northstrum

Recipe of the Month

Super Energy Kale soup

Ingredients:

- 1 medium sized onion, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- 5 cups vegetable stock
- 1 cup diced carrots
- 1 cup diced celery
- 2 red potatoes, diced in ½ inch cubes
- 3 cups kale, rinsed, stems removed and chopped fine
- 2 tsp dried thyme
- 2 tsp dried sage
- Salt and pepper to taste

Chop onion and sauté in a medium soup pot over medium low heat for about 5 minutes stirring frequently. Add garlic and continue to sauté for another minute. Add stock, carrots and celery, and bring to a boil on high heat. Once it comes to a boil reduce heat to a simmer and continue to cook for another 5 minutes. Add potatoes and kale and cook until potatoes are tender, about 10 more minutes. Add rest of ingredients and cook another 5 minutes. If you simmer for a longer time for extra flavor and richness, add a little more vegetable stock.