

# Understanding Hormone Imbalance

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Do you know what your pituitary gland, thyroid, thymus, adrenal glands and pancreas have in common? They are all endocrine glands, and their jobs are to make hormones.

**Hormones** are chemicals that deliver messages throughout your entire body via the bloodstream. These messages are delivered to your tissues and organs, but they are very specific: only those cells which are sensitive to that particular hormone will accept it and be activated by it.

Because they are very potent, it only takes a very small amount to initiate a significant response in the body. Hormones cannot be stored; they have to be produced and released at the precise moment they are needed. Therefore, in order to maintain balance within the systems in your body, this maintenance must continually be fine-tuned. An ongoing, intricate system of checks and balances is happening every minute of every day.

For example, if the level of one hormone increases too much, your body may release a different hormone to restore the balance necessary for proper mental and physical functions in your body.

## When something goes wrong

When your body's intricate system of checks and balances fails to keep your hormones at just the right levels and limits, hormone imbalance results. Hormone imbalance can happen at any age, but it is most common among adults who are beyond middle age. When hormones become unbalanced, it can have a profound impact on your quality of life, both physically and mentally.

Because there are so many different hormones working together in your body, the symptoms vary widely.

Women experiencing an imbalance of *estrogen and progesterone* may suffer from hot flashes, weight gain, decline in bone density, and fatigue. When *testosterone* levels get out of balance, men may notice decreased sex drive and infertility.

Many people suffer from an imbalance of the hormone *insulin*. Insulin is a hormone produced by the pancreas. When levels of insulin drop too low, diabetes results. Symptoms of diabetes include frequent urination, unquenchable thirst and weakness.

An overactive or underactive thyroid can also trigger hormone imbalance. If your thyroid is underactive you may be gaining weight that you cannot lose. You may also be very fatigued. And overactive thyroid may result in weight loss and hair loss.

## Solutions

If you suspect you have a hormone imbalance, talk to your doctor or work with a local Functional Diagnostic Nutrition Practitioner in your area.

Of course, eating a healthy diet and getting plenty of exercise are actions you can take right now to help your body cope with any stress it is under.

- Choose fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, legumes and lean proteins.
- Reduce or eliminate processed foods such as chips, candy, cookies, white flour and white sugar.
- Commit to an exercise program, and find someone to keep you accountable.

Taking care of your health will go a long way toward helping to alleviate the symptoms of hormone imbalance.



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