

# From Fatigue To Vitality... The Hormone Health Connection

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**Varsha  
Rathod, M.D.  
Spring 2008**



Depression, fatigue, chronic pain, weight gain, and anxiety are among the most common complaints of patients seen in my office. I hear these symptoms described on a daily basis. I often meet patients who are frustrated: they don't feel well, yet their doctors have drawn labs and ordered tests that have not lead to satisfactory solutions. They can't find anything wrong, and so they send patients away with a prescription for an antidepressant and the familiar advice that the problem is mental, not physical—*It's all in your head.*



I repeatedly find that these very real symptoms are actually the result of hormonal imbalance. Most patients are familiar with estrogen and progesterone. However, other forms such as insulin, cortisol, DHEA, thyroid, luteinizing hormones (LH), growth hormone, melatonin, and numerous intestinal hormones also contribute to our overall health and well-being. Hormones—chemicals released by glands—signal organs to function in a precise mode. A low thyroid level, for instance, negatively affects neurological, cardiological, metabolic, and uterine function. Our hormonal level responds to such external cues as stress, nutrition, light exposure, and toxicity by directing glands to produce different amounts of hormones to adapt to our environment.

**ARE YOU  
SUFFERING  
FROM...**

**Symptoms: Unexplained weight gain, decreased appetite, chronic fatigue, depression, and a persistent chill...**

These symptoms often indicate an abnormally functioning thyroid gland. The thyroid produces a hormone that controls the rate at which our cells operate. An unstable thyroid gland can lead to multiple symptoms. Many of my patients suspect that they have a thyroid problem. However, previous testing has come back negative, signaling that the thyroid is operating fine. Most physicians test TSH and T3 Free when checking thyroid function. Yet the patient is tired, gaining weight, always cold, or depressed. Women may experience heavy and frequent periods, painful constipation or have a persistently hoarse voice.

In my thyroid examination, I recommend a full panel (blood test), which includes TSH, T3 free, T4 free, T3 total, reverse T3, and thyroid peroxidase. When appropriate, I also suggest a 24-hour urine iodine test. This additional lab work often discovers thyroid malfunction that the TSH and T3 Free tests have missed.

**Solution: Call the office to get a complete set of thyroid labs done and a doctors' consultation to determine the best course of action.**

**Symptoms: Inability to handle stress, poor mental focus, and extreme fatigue...**

Stress is the result of physical and emotional imbalance that your body cannot correct on its own. When a person is constantly exposed to stressful situations, the adrenal glands become overworked. Initially, the adrenal glands produce too much cortisol in order to compensate for the extra stress. If the stressful situation persists, levels of cortisol will eventually decrease. The outcome is adrenal gland fatigue, which can lead to exhaustion.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE	PAGE
Hormones & Aging	1
Biological Hormones	1
For Women	2
For Men	3
Fish Oil	4

# Preventive Medicine, Varsha Rathod, M.D.

Located on the top of the kidneys, the adrenal glands continually manufacture cortisol, excitatory neurotransmitters, hormones associated with salt and water metabolism, and sex hormones. In addition to chronic fatigue, patients with improper cortisol levels often experience pigmentation (skin discoloration), allergies, chemical sensitivities, low blood pressure, weight gain in the abdomen and behind the neck. After saliva and/or urine tests have been obtained, correcting cortisol levels may involve adjusting lifestyle (i.e. yoga, Thai-chi, etc.), nutritional maintenance, supplement support or hormone support, based on individual needs.



**Solution:** Measure salivary and urine hormone levels and schedule a doctors consultation to determine the best course of action.

## WOMEN

**Symptoms:** Irregular menstruation, hot flashes, mood swings, headaches, and breast tenderness...

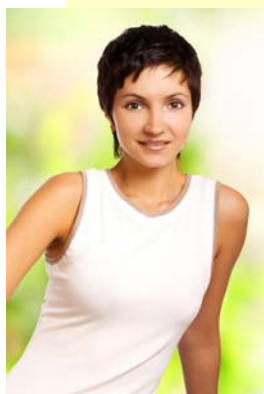
Symptoms of unbalanced estradiol and progesterone are commonly described as Pre-menstrual Syndrome. Pre-menstrual Syndrome is an extensive disorder, responsible for irregular menstruation, hot flashes, mood swings, weight gain, breast tenderness, and headaches. Uneven levels of estradiol and progesterone might be due to a deficiency of nutrients, minerals, and essential fatty acids; stress can even trigger hormone release. The ovaries release estradiol and progesterone rhythmically, over a 28-day cycle. Initially, rising levels of estradiol instruct the hypothalamus and pituitary gland to release LH, the hormone that signals ovulation. During ovulation, the fertile woman can become pregnant. If she does not, however, estradiol levels fall and progesterone levels rise.

*"As women have lived increasingly longer lives, they are facing problems their grandmothers never faced. At the turn of the century, women died soon after their ovaries quit."*

Charles Hammond, M.D.

### Symptoms of Low Estrogen or Progesterone:

- ◆ Hot Flashes
- ◆ Night Sweats
- ◆ Foggy thinking
- ◆ Tearful
- ◆ Depressed
- ◆ Heart palpitations
- ◆ Incontinence
- ◆ Sleep disturbances



### Symptoms of Excessive Estrogen or Progesterone:

- ◆ Mood Swings
- ◆ Breast tenderness
- ◆ Fibrocystic breasts
- ◆ Headaches
- ◆ Decreased Libido
- ◆ Candida infections
- ◆ Dizziness
- ◆ Uterine fibroids

Cont. on page 3

# Preventive Medicine, Varsha Rathod, M.D.

Menopause is the decline of the rhythmically cycling hormones. Though women still maintain low levels of hormones to ensure certain vital functions, the regularity of the 28-day cycle disappears. As the population ages, more and more women complain of negative symptoms associated with menopause.

The lifespan for a healthy female has never been longer—currently, women can expect to live an average of eighty years. The extended lifespan, largely the result of better sanitation and available healthcare, means that women live at least 30 post-menopausal years, and experience the myriad of symptoms that accompany low hormonal levels. The body interprets these low hormonal levels as a signal that the lifespan is nearing its end, and the body in turn begins to degenerate through rapid aging, autoimmunity, and various forms of cancer.



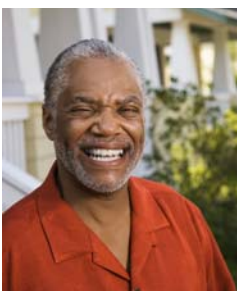
Intuitively, using hormones that are similar in composition to the body's own hormones makes sense. What makes even more sense is using these hormones cyclically, as the body did in its pre-menopausal state. I recommend this rhythmic dosage, in imitation of the natural female cycle.

**Solution:** Call to set up an appointment and for more information, please visit [www.preventivemedicinstl.com](http://www.preventivemedicinstl.com).

## MEN

**Symptoms:** Depression, muscle weakness, unexplained aches and pains, and decreased sex drive...

These symptoms are associated with low levels of Testosterone, a hormone produced in the testes. Like estrogen and progesterone, testosterone ebbs and flows with the males' 28-day cycle, a discovery only recently being employed in clinical practice. Nature has synchronized male and female rhythms to facilitate reproduction and mutual aging—Venus and Mars working in conjunction to effect maximal harmony. The woman's cycle is the major trigger for her male partners' cycle. Testosterone is released by a similar mechanism that releases an egg from the ovary.



Symptoms of low testosterone are extensive, and include: depression, apathy, a sluggish metabolism, muscle weakness, unexplained aches and pains, and increased abdominal girth (i.e. "potbelly"). Blood and saliva testing are used to determine testosterone levels.

**Solution:** Have your hormone levels checked and consider hormone therapy if levels are critically low.

### IN SUMMARY ...

I have only just begun the discussion of the vital role hormones play in ensuring optimal health. To put it simply, hormonal imbalances and disturbances are at the root of many chronic human diseases. We are responsible for our own hormonal imbalances. We eat badly, expose ourselves to an infinite number of toxins, and then expect our body to fix itself. The demands that we place on our bodies necessitates the careful, precise calibration of our hormones to restore our bodies to their natural, balanced states.

—Varsha Rathod, M.D.

If you are experiencing any of the above mentioned symptoms, please visit our website for information:

- ◆ Hormonal Health
- ◆ Thyroid Health
- ◆ Neurotransmitters
- ◆ Adrenal Health
- ◆ Stress & Re-balancing

# Preventive Medicine, Varsha Rathod, M.D.

*Special Invitation*—Visit Our Newly Remodeled Website:

[www.preventivemedicinesl.com](http://www.preventivemedicinesl.com)

“Every truth passes through three stages before it is recognized. In the first it is ridiculed, in the second it is opposed, in the third it is regarded as self evident.”

Arthur Schopenhauer

## IN THE NEWS.....

Recently, the media has been extolling the virtues of fish oil. Alternative medicine has been recommending fish oil for years, and now mainstream medicine has noticed. Fish oil provides the body with good fats—EPA and DHA. These good fats promote cardiovascular health and neurological and nerve function; improve vision and complexion; and support a powerful immune system and joint elasticity. On its own, the body is capable of converting only small amounts of fatty acids into EPA and DHA; therefore, these fatty acids are mainly obtained through supplementation. Flax oil, walnuts, pumpkin seeds and canola oil contain ALA (linoleic acid) which relies on your body converting it to EPA and DHA.

The Omega 3 fats EPA and DHA are also potent anti-inflammatory agents. Inflammation is a chronic, largely invisible condition. Patients are often symptom free, and so remain undiagnosed until the inflammation leads to other disease(s). Inflammation is caused by a range of factors, including food or environmental allergies, injury and resulting trauma, infections, and oxidative stress triggered by environmental toxins. Chronic and severe inflammation can lead to heart disease, Alzheimer’s disease, cancer and diabetes. I recommend that patients who suffer from chronic conditions take at least 1000 mg of EPA and DHA daily. For prevention of inflammation, I recommend patients take 400 mg -800 mg daily.

When selecting a fish oil product, be sure it is free of mercury, dioxin, and PCB’s. For patients who are vitamin D deficient, cod liver oil provides all the benefits of fish oil and also contains vitamin D and vitamin A. Be aware of fish oils that claim “pharmaceutical grade” on the label—since there are no defined standards for fish oil production and consumption, this is a term used for marketing purposes.



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