

How To Fix Your Hormones

AND LOSE WEIGHT

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Contents

Are These Four Hormones Blocking Your Weight Loss Efforts?3

 High Cortisol.....3

 Balance Cortisol:3

 Low Thyroid4

 Balance Thyroid Hormones:4

 Insulin Resistance4

 Balance Insulin:5

 Low Estrogen5

 Balance Estrogen:5

 Low Testosterone5

 Balance Testosterone:6

Weight Loss and Hormone Balance: Reclaim Your Victorious Cycle6

About the Author – Elizabeth Pattalis7

Are These Four Hormones Blocking Your Weight Loss Efforts?

Are you doing everything right, but still struggling to lose weight?

Firstly please be honest with yourself, if you are sneaking in the biscuits when no one is watching, consuming that glass too many wines or being sedentary, get on top of that first. Basics first.

But if you are doing all things right 'eating less and exercising more' then you do need to dig deeper.

A lot of people seem to think weight loss is just a case of simple math. That all it takes is "eating less and exercising more."

When it comes to losing weight you need to burn more calories than you consume. That is the equation, but at the same time it is more complicated than that.

But in essence almost anyone who struggles with weight loss also battles a hormone imbalance. Once you get your hormones in balance weight loss becomes more effortless, your body will naturally want to be a healthy weight for you.

I'm going to share the top hormonal reasons you may struggle to lose weight and strategies that I share with my clients that have given results.

High Cortisol

Cortisol is known as the stress hormone. It is produced by the adrenal glands and is part of our 'fight' or 'flight'. When cortisol rises the hormone encourages the conversion of blood sugar to fat for long term storage. This in times of famine serves us, however these days food is readily available.

A sign of high cortisol is if you're struggling with hard-to-lose belly fat. This is by far the most common hormonal imbalance I see in clinic. Cortisol when high affects all hormones in the body including thyroid, estrogen and testosterone.

In most cases it is chronic stress and/or diet contributing to the high cortisol - a diet that promotes unstable blood sugar and thus stresses the body. Eating too much carbohydrate and having long gaps between meals or a low calorie diet can contribute to this. As well as eating foods you are intolerant too.

High cortisol is associated with stomach fat, sugar cravings, brain fog and poor sleep quality.

The natural cortisol curve is to have high levels in the morning and low levels at night, the problem is today's society often has us continuously in a low grade fight or flight response without the physical activity.

Balance Cortisol:

- Manage how you respond to stress – rest and stop with the 'busy'.

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- Reduce or eliminate your caffeine intake. Caffeine increases cortisol secretion in people undergoing mental stress.
- Remove gluten and dairy from the diet – these are inflammatory and often a source of intolerance in people.
- Keep blood sugar levels stable, avoid high sugar foods and high refined carbohydrates.
- Avoid excessive cardio activity or high intense exercise that is lengthy in duration
- Implement activities that lower stress such as yoga, walking, pilates, meditation, deep breathing, etc.
- Supplements that may help include magnesium, fish oil and vitamin C.

Low Thyroid

A sluggish metabolism is another common culprit when it comes to weight loss struggles. Stress and high cortisol can slow down your thyroid, but other causes of low thyroid and slow metabolism include endocrine disruptors found in the environment, Vitamin D deficiency and gluten sensitivity.

Symptoms of low thyroid include weight gain, fatigue, brain fog, and depression. Higher fat levels on the side of your rib cage can be a sign.

I suggest you work with a nutritionist if you feel like your thyroid is off. A GP may order TSH bloods however it is not enough to determine reduced thyroid function. It is more important to know your T4 and T3 hormone levels.

Balance Thyroid Hormones:

- Reducing the underlying cause of stress.
- Avoid endocrine disruptors from your home and foods; they are commonly found in the lining of many canned foods and, plastic water bottles and containers and flame retardants.
- If you have a gluten sensitivity by removing foods with gluten becomes important as it can worsen thyroid health.
- Supplements that may help include fish oil, zinc and selenium.

Insulin Resistance

Insulin resistance means that your body's insulin, or glucose regulator, becomes less effective at lowering your blood sugars.

The end result is that instead of using the excess sugar to feed your muscles or burning it for energy, most of the carbohydrates you consume get stored as fat. Think of insulin as your fat storage hormone.

It is usually the result of a poor diet of refined carbohydrates and sugars for too many years. Insulin resistance is associated with conditions such as PCOS, diabetes and heart disease.

A physical sign of insulin resistance can be holding onto fat on your upper back and having 'love handles'.

Balance Insulin:

- Insulin resistance is associated with not metabolising carbohydrates well thus for you it may be better to reduce your carbs to a lower level, do NOT avoid completely.
- Eat a diet full of vegetables with small amounts of lean protein and healthy fats such as olive oil, nuts, seeds and fatty fish.
- Try adding 1 tbsp of apple cider to water and drink it about 30 minutes prior to your meals.
- Supplements to consider are fish oil, zinc and magnesium.

Low Estrogen

At normal levels estrogen keeps us lean. It helps balance our insulin which regulates our blood sugar levels. But when levels are not optimal it can cause havoc including weight gain.

Low estrogen stimulates appetite (this is why you become more hungrier before your period). The other issue with estrogen is that when it drops, you are more prone to being insulin resistant (see above hormone).

Balance Estrogen:

- Acupuncture and regular exercise are some natural ways to balance estrogen.
- You can also add ground flax seeds to your diet (I throw them in breakfast porridge and smoothies).
- Supplements are a little trickier but magnesium and fish oil can be a great place to start. Your individual symptoms should be addressed before determining what supplements would suit best for you.
- Ensure you are getting in enough healthy fats in your diet overall. Cholesterol is the backbone of estrogen.

Low Testosterone

These days we are exposed constantly to toxins. Toxins such as pesticides, plastics and other chemicals behave in the body like estrogen. They can be referred to as xeno estrogens. When this fake estrogen rises in the body it affects testosterone, we have an overload of too much 'estrogens' and not enough testosterone in comparison.

Low testosterone makes you soft, less able to build muscle and slows down your metabolism. A sign can be holding too much fat in the triceps area. Low testosterone is a major problem today and should not be treated lightly. Males today have lower levels than the male from 50 years ago. Balanced testosterone helps get you in shape, gives you energy and contributes to a healthy sex drive.

Balance Testosterone:

- Dump the sugar, including alcohol.
- Even moderate daily alcohol decreases testosterone levels, according to a recent Dutch study, alcohol in women reduces metabolism by more than 70%, albeit temporarily.
- Up your intake of healthy fats.
- Perform weight sessions.
- Get good quality sleep.
- Get adequate amounts of sun or take a vitamin D supplement.

Weight Loss and Hormone Balance: Reclaim Your Victorious Cycle

One of the great things about weight loss and hormone balance is that they go hand-in-hand. Just as hormone balance can lead to weight loss, losing a few kilos can help bring your hormones back into balance. For example: excess stomach fat has a much higher concentration of estrogen; drop a few kilos and you'll see your estrogen levels improve.

Your next step is to take action. We need to get the foundations right for better health.

About the Author – Elizabeth Pattalis

Elizabeth has ten years' experience in the health industry with a mission to help others feel good about themselves. She is trained in nutritional medicine, personal training, pilates, kinesiology and is a member of the Australian Traditional Medicine Society. Her special interest include fat loss, hormonal health and mental health. Elizabeth also specializes in plant based nutrition.

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