

Georgia Hormones P.C.

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Holistic Female Health

Holistic Medicine: Holistic medicine is the art and science of healing that addresses care of the whole person – body, mind and spirit. We do not just treat body parts, nor do we just treat symptoms. The practice of Holistic Medicine is focused on attaining optimal health, through the prevention and treatment of disease by **correcting the causes** and modifying contributing factors. Treatment options come from a variety of traditions and are selected in order to best meet the unique needs of the patient. The realm of choices may include lifestyle modification and complementary approaches as well as conventional drugs and surgery. The ideal practitioner-patient relationship is a partnership, which encourages patient autonomy and values the needs and insights of both parties. All medical problems come in the context of your life, including your social, family, work, mental, spiritual and medical environment. As Holistic practitioners, we focus on the unique needs and nature of the person who has the illness, rather than on the illness that has the person. We want to know how we can help you, as the complete person that you are.

In addition to hormone issues and changes, we will need to consider your diet, exercise, sleep patterns, vitamins and other supplements, as well as dental hygiene, alcohol consumption and even the water you drink.

A Woman's Health Across Her Lifetime: A woman's hormone status can change throughout her lifetime. A young woman beginning her menstrual cycles may have normal regular cycles or she might be experiencing irregular periods, painful periods, acne, PMS or abnormal hair growth. We can measure hormone levels and make adjustments as required. The need for birth control may be a consideration, as may infertility. The treatments chosen must be appropriate to your needs and comfort. As a woman moves through her prime reproductive years, irregular or heavy bleeding, fibroids or endometriosis may arise. Often, these problems are due to hormone imbalances. Supplementation with natural, bioidentical hormones can make a world of difference.

At birth, a woman's ovaries already hold all the eggs she will ever have. Eggs are continuously being called up to maturity, but only a few will develop fully. The rest die off, so the total remaining number of eggs gradually declines. As the remaining eggs age, many do not function properly resulting in the loss of the hormone progesterone. The decline of egg number and function frequently results in a hormone imbalance called estrogen dominance or unopposed estrogen. These women may experience heavy irregular periods, fibroid growth, weight gain, breast pain and poor sleep. Treatment with bioidentical progesterone can relieve her symptoms.

At menopause, estrogen levels change. Some women gradually lose their estrogen as they approach menopause. Other women may experience a surge of excess estrogen. The symptoms can be similar. Only by measuring a woman's complete hormone profile can we determine what her current hormone needs are. During the transition, her hormone profile can change, as will the therapy.

In the later years, when the ovaries make little if any hormones, our goal is to supplement those hormones in decline. There are many ways of administering natural, bioidentical hormones including capsules, patches, skin creams, vaginal creams and tablets, and oral troches. Each woman has her own rate of both absorbing the hormones given and of getting rid of them. Since these hormones are identical to those in nature, they can be measured to insure adequate absorption while avoiding excess or overdose. The goal is sufficient hormones to meet a woman's needs without the side effects caused by excess.

Diet and Metabolism: Reducing consumption of carbohydrate foods, avoiding excess total calories, and avoiding unhealthy fats are a key to maintaining health. As we age, metabolism slows down and we don't burn

calories as fast as we used to. We tend to exercise less and eat more. Life stresses can increase cravings for high carbohydrate foods, which tend to be deposited around our middles as abdominal fat. This causes a vicious cycle where **stress, central obesity, unopposed estrogen, and eating more carbohydrates**, all contribute to increases in abdominal fat. An aging digestive system can lose some of its ability to make digestive enzymes, bile and stomach acid. Supplemental digestive enzymes are available, as are stomach acid enhancers. It also helps to reduce the consumption of heavy animal fats and substitute easier to digest fish or chicken. Eating more vegetables and fruit will reduce the workload on your gall bladder, enhance natural digestive function, and reduce acid reflux.

Vitamins, Minerals and other Supplements: As we age, our digestive tracks are less able to absorb many vitamins and minerals, just when our needs are increasing. **We all need to take supplements.** Calcium is important for bone and nervous system health. Adequate vitamin D levels are also needed for calcium absorption. It is now known that people with higher levels of vitamin D have lower rates of colon, prostate, breast and other cancers. We can measure your vitamin B-12 and vitamin D to see if you need extra supplements. For a complete list, see my pamphlet entitled *Essential Dietary Supplements*, either on my web site or at my office. Many people take other supplements, herbs and teas for various purposes. These include CoQ10, glucosamine, chondroitin sulfate, licorice, Dong Quai, and many others. Many books and Internet articles are available that cover the use of those products.

Exercise: Perhaps, no single life change is as important as regular exercise. Our bodies are designed for motion. Without regular exercise the heart and lungs, muscles, bones and joints degenerate. Using our muscles burns calories and fat. Exercise has three major components. **(1) Aerobic exercise helps burn excess fat.** Aerobic exercises include walking, hiking, jogging, bicycle riding, using a treadmill, elliptical machine and other machines. Aerobic exercises help improve heart and lung function and strengthen supporting bones. **(2) Stretching** is also helpful. Consider trying Yoga, Tai Chi or Chi Gong. They are all good stretching exercises. These practices also improve posture and balance, reducing the likelihood of falls and broken bones. **(3) Weight Training and toning** improves strength, burns calories and helps keep bones strong, further reducing fracture risk.

Sleep: Adequate sleep is needed to restore strength, mental health and resistance to disease. Progesterone, estrogen and regular exercise can all enhance restful sleep.

Dental Hygiene: Investing in good teeth is vitally important to a long healthy life. We all need to regularly eat rough, raw vegetables like carrots, celery, cabbage, dark green lettuces, broccoli and many others. That **requires strong healthy teeth.** The supplements that help strong bones are also needed for healthy teeth. Chronic gum infections can cast bacteria into the blood stream, which can inflame plaque in the coronary arteries. **Sick gums can lead to increased heart attack rates.** Electric toothbrushes like the Sonicare and Braun help kill bacteria. Regular brushing, flossing, and dental check ups are needed.

Alcohol: Although red wine has been suggested to be beneficial for the heart, excess alcohol consumption does more harm than good and increases breast cancer rates. Beer has high levels of carbohydrate and can increase abdominal weight gain. Ideally, alcohol consumption should be limited to no more than one half drink per day.

Drinking Water: We all need to get enough water. Soft drinks, energy drinks, sports drinks and juices may contain lots of sugar, sometimes salt and frequently caffeine, artificial sweeteners and other unneeded or harmful chemicals. We need **just plain water!** There is lots of controversy about plastic water bottles, and I don't see that issue being settled any time soon. For now, **just keep drinking water throughout the day.**

No one can expect you to change everything at once. With patience and self-care, if you want, we can help you gradually reduce those habits that are harmful and encourage needed life style changes. **You should feel some improvement right away.** We will help by supplementing hormones, vitamins and minerals. We can talk about diet, exercise, sleep habits and recreation. We can even talk about sex. **Our goal is to help you maintain your health and vigor, so you can enjoy a fulfilling, interesting, active and worthwhile old age.**