

Functional Medicine: Are You Suffering with Estrogen Dominance? Learn The Facts

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Estrogen is not a single hormone. It is a class of hormones and hormone like compounds that have estrogenic properties.

There are human estrogens, animal estrogens, synthetic estrogens, phytoestrogens, and xenoestrogens.

The three human estrogens are estradiol, estrone, and estriol, and belong to the steroid hormone family.

"Estrogen dominance" is a term coined by Harvard physician John R. Lee M.D. It describes a condition where a woman can have deficient, normal, or excessive estrogen but the body has little or no progesterone to balance its effects. Signs and symptoms of estrogen dominance include:

Speeds up the aging process

Weight gain around middle

Allergies

Autoimmune disorders

Breast cancer

Breast tenderness

Cold hands and feet as a symptom of thyroid dysfunction

Decreased sex drive

Muscle and joint pain

Depression

Dry eyes

Early onset of menstruation

Uterine cancer

Fat gain in abdomen, hips, and thighs

Fatigue

Fibrocystic breasts

Foggy thinking

Hair loss

Headaches

Hypoglycemia

Increased blood clotting
Infertility
Irregular menstrual periods
Insomnia
Memory loss
Mood swings
PMS
Ovarian cysts
Pre-menopausal bone loss
Sluggish metabolism
Thyroid dysfunction
Uterine cancer
Uterine fibroids
Water retention and bloating

Causes of Estrogen Dominance Syndrome

Besides the natural hormonal fluctuations of menopause, certain lifestyle choices and conditions can also contribute to estrogen dominance syndrome, especially a low-fiber diet, overloading the liver with internal toxins, and absorbing toxins from the environment.

Overloading the Liver

The liver is a filter of sorts. It detoxifies our body, protecting us from the harmful effects of chemicals, elements in food, environmental toxins, and even natural products of our metabolism, including excess estrogen.

Anything that impairs liver function or ties up the detoxifying function will result in excess estrogen levels, whether it has a physical basis, as in liver disease, or an external cause, as with exposure to environmental toxins, drugs, or dietary substances.

Estrogen is produced not only internally but also produced in reaction to chemicals and other substances in our food. When it is not broken down adequately, higher levels of estrogen build up.

In like manner, the estrogen dominance syndrome can be evoked in women by too much alcohol, drugs, or environmental toxins, all of which limit the liver's capacity to cleanse the blood of estrogen.

Environment

We live in an estrogenic or feminizing environment. Certain chemicals in the environment and our foods, one of which is DDT, cause estrogenic effects. Although banned in 1972, DDT, like its breakdown product DDE, is an estrogen-like substance and is still present in the environment.

Chlorine and hormone residues in meats and dairy products can also have estrogenic effects.

In men, the estrogenic environment may result in declining quality of sperm or fertility rates.

In women, it may lead to an epidemic of female diseases, all traceable to excess estrogen/deficient progesterone.

In industrialized countries such as the United States, diets rich in animal fats, sugar, refined starches, and processed foods can lead to estrogen levels in women twice that of women of third-world countries.

We are constantly exposed to xenobiotics (petrochemicals), xenohormone-laden meats and dairy products, forms of pollution, and prescriptions for synthetic hormones (such as the 'The Pill' and Premarin).

It isn't too surprising that estrogen dominance has become an epidemic in industrialized countries. Over exposure to these potentially dangerous substances has significant consequences, one of which is passing on reproductive abnormalities to offspring. Estrogen "deficiency" that is quite often used as an explanation of menopausal symptoms or health problems is not supported by sound research. When a woman's menstrual cycle is functioning normally, estrogen is the dominant hormone for the first two weeks and is balanced by progesterone, which is the dominant hormone for the latter two weeks.

After menopause, estrogen is still present and continues to be manufactured in fat cells. Most menopausal women have too little estrogen to support pregnancy, but sufficient amounts for other normal body functions. Few women are truly deficient in estrogen; most become progesterone deficient.

If estrogen becomes the dominant hormone and progesterone is deficient, excess estrogen becomes toxic to the body. Progesterone has a balancing effect on estrogen.

Supplemental estrogen, even in the slightest amounts, in a woman who doesn't need it, or who has no progesterone to balance it, can lead to many serious side effects.

When a woman complains of even the slightest menopausal type symptoms, conventional medical doctors will recommend a prescription of estrogen.

It is irresponsible and dangerous for doctors to be routinely prescribing estrogen for any type of pre-menopausal or menopausal symptom, and this practice can have tragic consequences.

Dr. Badanek has been and currently is 40 years into active/private practice in the Ocala/Marion County, Florida region. Dr. Badanek practices Natural/Holistic Medicine through the use of Functional/Integrative Models for diagnostic and treatment protocols for the health challenged. Find him online at Dr.Badanek.com and www.alternativewholistic.com, and see what the facility has to offer the sick and health challenged. To schedule an appointment call 352-622-1151