

Estrogen, Testosterone, Thyroid, Cortisol, & Your Skin



Hormones,
Health & Harmony

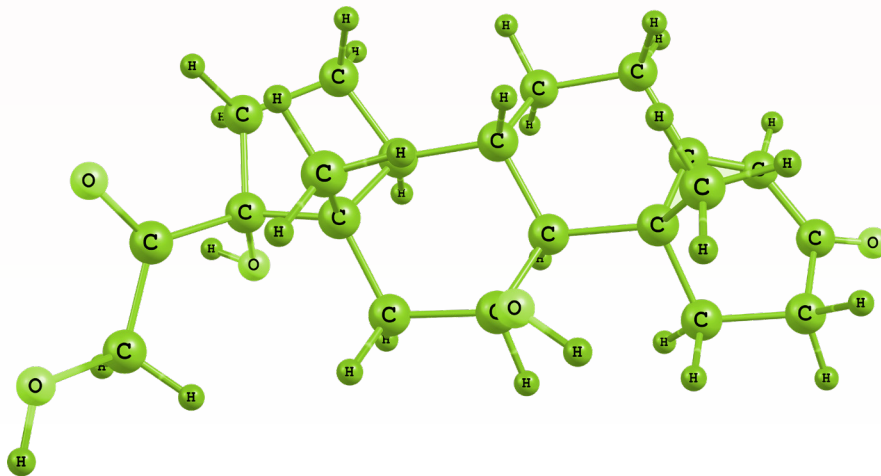
Estrogen, Testosterone, Thyroid, Cortisol, and Your Skin

Your skin is your magic mirror, and it gives you important clues about your overall health and vitality. And there's no better time than right now to stop covering up skin problems. Let's get to the root cause to help your skin and your well-being – starting with your hormones.

When our hormones are off-balance, we are more likely to develop skin problems like dry skin, fine lines, wrinkles, melasma, or more serious problems like acne, rosacea, and other inflammatory skin conditions. There are many hormones that impact our health and our skin, but first, you must understand what hormones are and what they do.

What Are Hormones?

So what exactly are hormones? They are biochemical messengers used by the endocrine system to communicate with itself and the rest of the body system. They're really important for communication within the body. Hormones are derived from amino acids, phospholipids, and cholesterol, and they play an essential role in many aspects of our health. It might actually surprise you how much they play a role in our health, our mental focus, memory, cognition, sex drive, cardiovascular health, bone growth, sugar regulation, weight, metabolism, and more.



Hormonal imbalance is one of the big root causes of a lot of other health problems as well. Our hormones have this symbiotic relationship with one another. If one hormone is out of balance, there's a domino effect. If one gets off balance, the other ones can get off balance. This is why it's important to really keep them in balance.

Many hormones play a role in the health of your skin, from adrenal hormones like cortisol, DHA, thyroid hormones, and melatonin. Melatonin is oftentimes thought of as your sleep hormone, but it often plays a role in your skin as well. Sex hormones such as estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone are also key players.

What Happens When Hormones Are Imbalanced?

Our skin, our largest organ, actually has hormones going through it. Hormonal balance is actually happening in our skin as well as in the rest of our bodies. Some hormones help protect our skin from breakouts and aging. Others cause those symptoms. So it really, truly is about balance. I can't stress this enough!

All of our hormones play an important role, but when they're out of balance, that's really when the problems occur. For example, melasma is a skin condition that's known as hyperpigmentation. Usually, people experience it around the cheeks, and it's often triggered by pregnancy, birth control pills and hormone therapy. Changes in the hormones estrogen and progesterone cause extra melanin production during sun exposure, and this leads to melasma.



That's not the only skin condition caused by hormonal imbalance. There are so many others. Rosacea occurs from cortisol imbalance, and other inflammatory hormones play a big role in that. Imbalance can also cause premature aging.

Hormone-Disrupting Chemicals

While most of our hormones, like estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone decline, our stress hormone cortisol tends to rise as we age. All of this affects the skin's texture and appearance.

This is why it's essential to be aware of some of the things that might be causing you to go out of balance. Part of it is genetics, but we do know that we can change our genetic expression by our lifestyle choices. If you already have genetic predispositions, it's important to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Start by avoiding things that cause imbalance, like skin care products that contain endocrine-disrupting chemicals.



These endocrine-disrupting chemicals are hormone-disrupting. And they have been associated with a lot of hormonal imbalances in the body, including fertility issues, breast development, early breast development, breast cancer, prostate cancer, thyroid disease, neuroendocrine problems, obesity, cardiovascular disease, and many other hormonally related conditions.

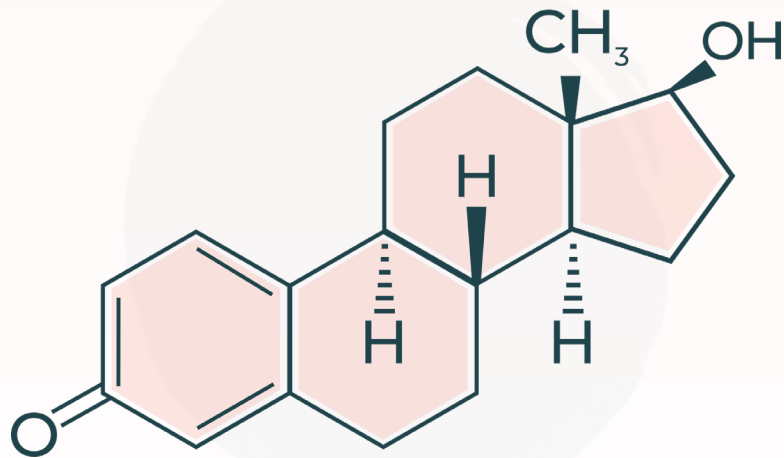
Hormone-Disrupting Medicines

Certain medications can also disrupt your hormones. It may not be a big surprise, but birth control pills are a big culprit here. While a lot of women take these for obvious reasons, they also can take them to help fix hormonal imbalances or address them. However, birth control pills typically do not address the root cause. They end up creating more imbalances in your hormones. So while they might help manage certain symptoms because of the way that they work, they're going to suppress certain hormones like testosterone.



As a result, you end up throwing off your hormones, including cortisol and testosterone. And also there are nutritional deficiencies related to birth control pills. If you're taking birth control pills now, talk to your doctor about options before you just stop taking them. It is still good to know that they could be playing a role in your symptoms. And if you've taken them in the past, they may have created some problems early on that are causing more problems now.

The Impact of Estrogen



Estrogen is a big one for women – however, men have estrogen too. Estrogen levels decrease as we age. That decrease in age can create certain changes in the skin. You might notice dryness, less elasticity, sagging skin, and more wrinkles. Your skin can become more fragile, paler, and duller looking. This is especially for those of you who are over 40 or who are concerned about aging with a sudden drop in estrogen. For women, this usually occurs around 40 years old or older.

However, for some people, this drop may start even earlier and the skin starts to become more thin, sallow, dull. You might start to notice changes in the firmness texture of your skin. Fine lines start to turn more into deeper creases, more wrinkles. You'll start to notice the areas around your eyes and lips don't have that same kind of firmness.

That has to do with the lowering of estrogen. The skin might not look as vibrant in large part because there's less blood flow that enters the skin as a result of a drop in estrogen. Now, I don't tell you all this for it to be depressing! In fact, I think of aging as something that can be really beautiful.

In all these wrinkles that we have, they're actually signs we've been living, laughing, and enjoying life.

I also know we don't want to look older than we are, and it's always nice when we have a more youthful-looking appearance naturally. So here are some other signs of low estrogen. When it starts to impact other areas of your body, you could experience bone loss, hot flashes, insomnia, mood changes, and night sweats.

This is part of the normal part of the aging process for women. Some of us have more of these symptoms because of genetics and because of lifestyle choices. Some women don't have many of these issues at all. But there are some things that can help naturally with supporting our estrogen levels.

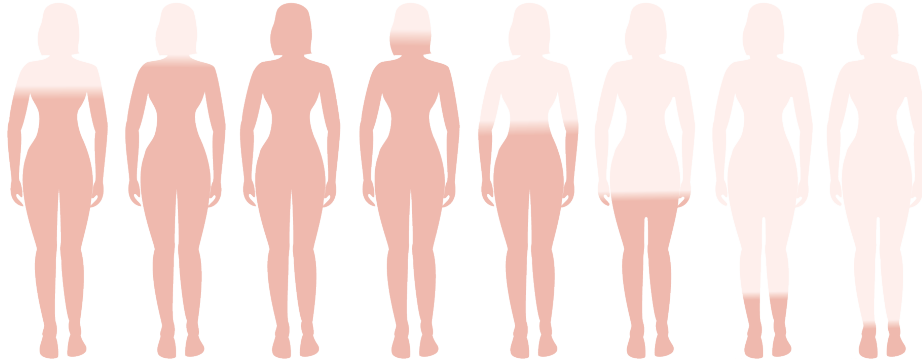
Natural Estrogen Support

Phytoestrogens are plant estrogens, and they can be found naturally in certain foods like flaxseed. And they've also been shown to have beneficial hormonal effects. So although flaxseed is known as a natural estrogen mimicker, eating flaxseed actually helps estrogen metabolism as well. This breakdown and removal of estrogens helps avoid the excess level.



Herbs like maca, black cohosh and hops have also been shown to help women with low estrogen. Some women will benefit from bioidentical hormone therapy. This is not necessarily for everyone, so it's crucial to work with a well-trained hormone specialist or a practitioner that is well-trained in this area. And remember: you want this to be a natural process. You don't want to have hormones at such high levels that can actually create more risks or more harm than good. Always talk to your doctor.

ESTROGEN HORMONE LEVEL



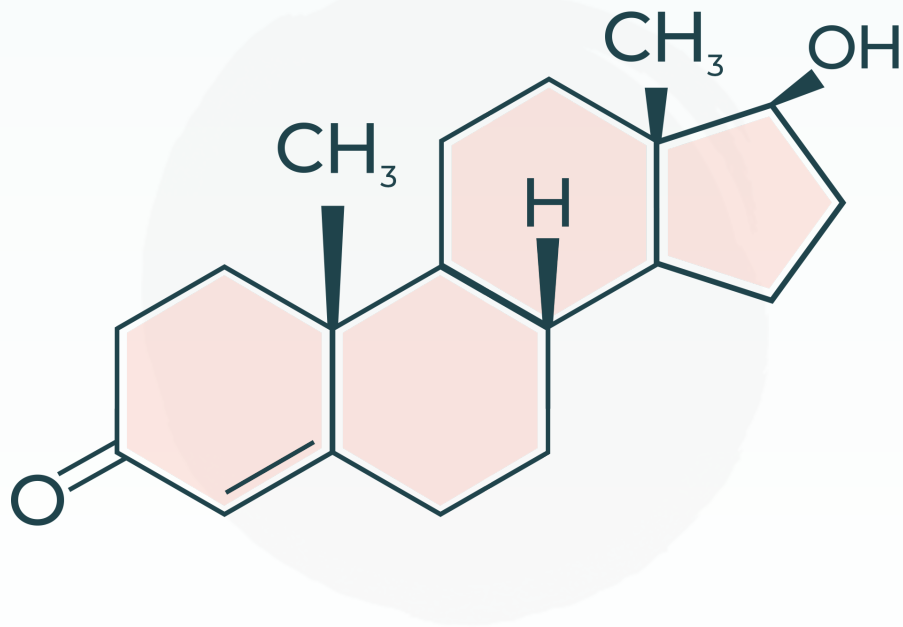
The Problem with High Estrogen

High estrogen has its own host of problems. Women who are pregnant or on birth control pills generally have higher estrogen levels, and they're often more prone to hyperpigmentation. Certain genetic profiles tend to have higher amounts of estrogen as well. Part of that has to do with the fact that your body just doesn't metabolize estrogen as well.

The key is to manage estrogen that might be on the higher side. You want to consider eating foods like seaweed and cruciferous vegetables. And this is also important for people who might be taking estrogen as hormone replacement therapy. You want to support your estrogen metabolism.

The cruciferous vegetable family, including broccoli, kale, and cauliflower helps with estrogen metabolism. So if you think that your estrogen levels may be out of balance, it's a good idea to talk with a qualified healthcare provider about testing your hormones and actually getting individualized support. There are some things that you can just do with your diet, but it's also good if you are experiencing symptoms to get some support from a doctor that works with hormones.

The Impact of Testosterone



Testosterone isn't just for men. Women have it too. Women have less testosterone than men, but we do notice that it can get out of balance with us. Testosterone stimulates sebum production, the oil in our skin, which is really important for protecting the skin with these natural oils.

When we get too much testosterone, it can actually lead to acne breakouts. So whether you're a man or a woman, hormones like estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone help the body maintain a delicate balance. Hormone fluctuations during or around certain ages of significant changes like puberty and menopause can lead to an increase in testosterone or challenges with hormone metabolism, which can also lead to acne. If your skin is excessively oily or prone to acne, you might be dealing with some testosterone imbalances.

Natural Testosterone Support

To help testosterone balance and metabolism, here are some recommendations for you and your diet. One of the things to avoid is dairy products. In my 22 years of seeing patients, one of the biggest things that I've seen with skin is that most acne breakouts have to do with dairy. This is not necessarily a problem for everybody, but I do find it with the majority of people. Even organic or raw dairy could be a problem for you.



To see if this is an issue for you, try cutting out dairy for two weeks and notice how your skin does without it. Introduce it back in to see if you notice the difference. Another dietary tip is consuming more omega-3 fatty acids by eating wild Alaskan salmon or taking a high-quality supplement.

Another supplement, a nutrient that's really important for testosterone metabolism and testosterone balance, is zinc. You can get small amounts of zinc by eating green beans, sesame seeds, and pumpkin seeds.

If that's not enough and you're still having trouble with too much of the sebum and breakouts, then you might also want to consider supplementing with saw palmetto. Saw palmetto is an herb that can help with testosterone metabolism. At the same time, if you are having these problems, it's good to check in with your healthcare provider because imbalances can be a very individual thing.

The Impact of Thyroid Hormones



When we look at the thyroid hormones, typically it tends to be “hypo,” which means low, or “hyper,” which is high. Obviously in the middle is going to be a more balanced place, which is ideally where we want to be. I’m seeing more and more people with thyroid problems, so this is a big one. And part of the rise in the number of people with thyroid problems has to do with our lifestyles.

Part of thyroid hormone imbalance is due to endocrine-disrupting chemicals that we’re exposed to now more than ever. Hyperthyroid can cause warm, sweaty, and flushed skin. More sweating and heat can be noticed on the skin with someone that’s more hyperthyroid. An underactive thyroid can lead to more dry skin and even may reduce your ability to be able to sweat to perspire.

If you’re noticing any of these skin issues, that alone is not enough to diagnose you with the thyroid problem. You also want to look at other symptoms, like weight issues. If you tend to have a hard time losing weight, that might be more hypothyroidism. On the other hand, you

want to look at things like your digestion. If you have constipation, diarrhea, fatigue, or feel overstimulated, talk with your doctor about thyroid testing.

Natural Thyroid Support

If your thyroid is low or high or if you have antibodies to your thyroid, you'll definitely want a treatment that is specifically for you and whatever your specific thyroid problems are. Ask your doctor for a full thyroid panel. A lot of times doctors will just order a TSH. But what I want to encourage you to do is to catch thyroid issues before they become a real problem.

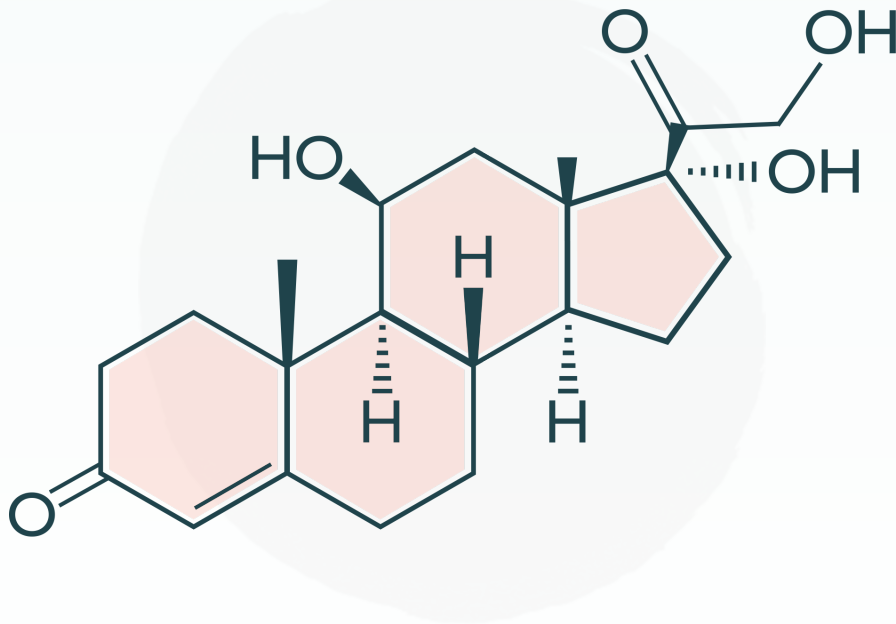
In addition to TSH, I encourage you to get your doctor to order Free T3, Free T4, thyroid antibodies and reverse T3 tests. That's a more comprehensive thyroid panel that will give more information about what's happening with your thyroid hormones.

To keep skin hydrated and healthy with that oil barrier, you want to think about things that can help with that balance, especially if you're trying to address hypothyroidism. You might notice your skin is really dry. Hydrating your skin from the inside and the outside is important for you, so consuming essential fatty acids like omega-3s is a great start.

Everyone can benefit from these, but it's going to be particularly important if you're trying to work on getting your thyroid balanced. Your doctor might recommend medication, but there are also certain herbs and nutrients that can help with balancing your thyroid naturally.



The Impact of Cortisol Hormones



When you're stressed, cortisol is one of the hormones that's released, and it comes from your adrenal glands. A surge in cortisol actually increases sebum production, which can trigger acne. It also increases inflammatory pathways, which trigger skin issues, especially inflammatory skin issues.

In addition, chronically high levels of cortisol can also lead to sugar cravings and eating sugar also increases inflammatory skin problems and breakouts. We get into this vicious cycle when we're stressed. Our bodies are actually well-equipped to handle acute stress. It's that physical response that helps us react quickly to a dangerous situation. The problem is that we have constant, ongoing stress. This ongoing chronic stress becomes the problem and the body has difficulty creating balance.

Chronic stress can worsen skin problems, especially acne, eczema, rosacea and vitiligo. So if you have high cortisol, you might notice these inflammatory skin problems. But some of the other things you might notice if you're overly stressed and you have high cortisol is you might feel wired or tired. You might be experiencing something that some people call adrenal fatigue – or an imbalance in your adrenal function.

You may notice that you have gained some extra weight around your midsection, and you just can't get rid of that weight. Or you might have sugar cravings or insomnia. You just can't fall asleep at night. You're feeling that wired feeling at night.

Natural Cortisol Support

Relaxation techniques like breathwork and meditation can help with cortisol imbalance. In addition, herbs called adaptogenic herbs can be great at helping with rebalancing cortisol levels and supporting your adrenals. Herbs like rhodiola, ashwagandha, astragalus, and ginseng are all adaptogenic herbs that can help support your adrenal glands. Talk with your healthcare provider if you're concerned about your adrenals and about getting some testing.

You can get a saliva or blood test. Cortisol levels are supposed to be higher in the morning and get lower at the end of the day. If you only do a blood test in the morning or at any time of the day, you're only seeing what the cortisol is doing at that one point when your blood draw is done. That's what's nice about salivary testing – you can test throughout the day.



The saliva test will give you a graph of how your cortisol is released. And I have seen patients with the reverse of what's normal – low cortisol in the morning and then high at night. These people typically can't wake up in the morning. They have to get by with coffee in the morning. By the time they get to the evening, they're all wired and they can't sleep.

Doing some stress management exercises can also help. It doesn't have to be complicated. Breathwork, getting out in nature, and meditation are easy to do, and we all need to be doing them in order to help keep our hormones balanced and to get rebalanced. The healing powers of nature are incredible. Getting out in nature, touching the ground, being on the ground, grounding yourself, getting in the water, touching the soil, touching the plants – these have a profound impact on stress levels and there's research behind this and ways that it can actually help rebalance your hormones.

The Bottom Line

There are many other hormones that play a role in our skin health and overall health, but these are some of the major contributors. If you have any concerns about hormonal balance, talk to your physician and take steps to balance your lifestyle.