



10 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

Hormones. Beautiful, infuriating, maddening, magical, destructive, empowering hormones. Lady chemicals. They're mysterious things. We can't see them, scarcely know their names but ignore them at your peril. Because Midulthood brings with it the perfect hormonal storm. You can ride it out and hope for the best, or arm yourself and tackle it head on. Here are the basics:

1. Hormones are special chemical messengers created in the endocrine glands. These messengers control most major bodily functions, from simple basic needs like hunger to complex systems like reproduction, and even emotions and mood. Ooooooh. Ahhhh. Mmmmm.
2. It's not all about fertility and gender... Take Cortisol, for example, which has been called the "stress hormone" because of the way it assists the body in responding to stress. Badly in our cases. Anyway...
3. The crucial sex hormones are... Oestrogen, which improves mood, libido, sleep quality, concentration and memory, skin collagen and elasticity, maintains skin and vaginal lubrication, body temperature and bone density, reduces risk of heart disease and risk of colon cancer.
4. ...Progesterone, a natural diuretic, antidepressant, protector against breast disease, uterine cancer and blood clots, sleep enhancer, temperature regulator, controls high blood pressure, and maintains bone density, thyroid function, cortisol levels (see above), and good cholesterol, helps convert fat to energy, and keeps the uterus in good condition.
5. ...Testosterone which increases libido, self confidence, focus and motivation, maintains energy, memory, bone density and muscle mass strength and stamina.
6. Sex hormone levels vary at different times of your cycle. Usually low in the first two weeks of your cycle and high in the second two (when you are like, "I want that bearded guy on the tube please NOW"). The ratio is important for a balanced and symptomless menstrual cycle. Yes, apparently there is such a thing.
7. Most women have the best day of their cycle around day 10, when they have energy, breasts feel fine, good libido. And 'good' vaginal secretions. Usually in the third week things begin to slide and the fourth week is when some women are beside themselves with oestrogen dominance.
8. Some people think testosterone is just for men. Not so. We have it and a small drop in levels can have a big impact on your wellbeing. It gives us focus, emotional stamina, physical stamina and a general feeling of positivity and motivation. If

you don't have it, [things can get rocky](#), [anxious](#) and altogether a bit heavy.

9. In your 40s your oestrogen levels begin to decrease and that's when you get oestrogen withdrawal. This can cause [mood swings](#), anxiety and depression, loss of libido, [insomnia](#), headaches, brain foggy and [memory loss](#), wrinkles and painful sex, dry skin, vaginal dryness, [recurrent cystitis](#), sweats, osteoporosis, palpitations and [shortness of breath](#). Not much then.
10. The average age to reach the menopause is 51. We'll just leave that here.

With thanks to the amazing Dr Martin Galy at 23MD 23md.co.uk/dr-martin-galy/

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