



HORMONE EXPERT

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Hormone treatments and supplements can help to ease menopausal symptoms.

Q Are there any natural ways to reduce PMS symptoms and bad cramps? *Naomi, 36*

A PMS symptoms and bad cramps are usually due to low progesterone levels that are not balanced with oestrogens before your period. Natural supplements, including agnus castus, also called chaste tree extract, as well as evening primrose can help with this.

A diet that is low in sugar and

refined carbohydrates, and high in protein, good fats such as avocado and olive and coconut oils, and slow-release carbohydrates, such as sweet potatoes and brown rice, is also beneficial.

Regular exercise releases natural endorphins, which can help battle the symptoms of PMS too.

Q I feel tired all the time, even though I get enough sleep and exercise and eat well. Is there anything I can do? *Tara, 49*

A It's important to ask your GP about your hormone balance. Many women at 49 can be perimenopausal, and this can result in fluctuating hormone levels, which can contribute to tiredness. In perimenopause, the first hormones to decline are progesterone and testosterone. Both of these hormones contribute to your energy. Another hormone I often

measure with my patients is DHEA. It's primarily an adrenal hormone and I call it the 'vitality hormone', as it helps to give you get-up-and-go. This naturally declines as we get older, and also if there has been stress or illness. These hormones can be measured and replaced by a specialist. Some women also benefit from supplements such as agnus castus or evening primrose oil.

Q I suffer from mood swings and I don't know why. I've been through the menopause (albeit early) – is this the cause of the problem?

Katherine, 48

A Yes, menopause can be the reason for mood swings. We often think of menopausal symptoms as being hot flushes, but some women don't experience these at all and instead can have symptoms such as mood swings, insomnia, poor concentration and memory, dry skin and hair, or loss of energy and libido. Low levels of oestrogen, progesterone and testosterone all play a part in this. I find progesterone is the primary hormone that effects mood. I prescribe bioidentical oestrogens and progesterone hormones to my patients to balance these hormones and ease the menopausal symptoms. For women who don't want to take hormones, taking 50-100mg of a supplement such as 5-HTP, which is a natural precursor to serotonin, may also help.



Balancing hormone levels can boost your get-up-and-go.