

The Dangers of High Estrogen Levels, Even for Women

Stop and consider for a moment what differentiates a man from a woman. I'm not talking about the obvious variances in physical attributes, but rather the internal physiological terrain and how it varies between the two sexes. Hormonally speaking, you might say that a man is more dominant in testosterone, while a woman's body favors estrogen: and you'd technically be right. But is it really that simple, and is there a point at which high estrogen levels can become a problem for women?

It's pretty much common knowledge that men generally want to avoid estrogen like the plague – we get plenty of it as it is, and more often than not need more testosterone. But women who have very high estrogen levels (known as estrogen dominance), or who may be at risk of developing estrogen-related health conditions, are oftentimes in the exact same boat as men. For a woman suffering from estrogen dominance, even a little extra estrogen from, say, an endocrine-disrupting chemical (EDC) in her favorite shampoo, could be enough to completely send her health over the edge.

You might be thinking to yourself: but isn't estrogen *good* for women? It is, but only in proper balance with testosterone. If you think of the human body as a see-saw, testosterone and estrogen hormones represent the weight and counterweight that keep the platform from plunging one way or the other into the ground. There are going to be ups and downs, sure – back and forth, ebb and flow – this is completely normal and in line with normal human physiology. But there's a general balance that keeps the body anchored to the pivot point, so to speak, and this balance is missing in women with estrogen dominance.

Common Causes of Estrogen Dominance

So what causes dangerously high levels of estrogen in women? There are many potential factors, not the least of which include EDCs, as I mentioned earlier. These chemical toxins hide in everything from water and air to food and even furniture. Escaping them in our heavily industrialized world is definitely a challenge – especially when you can't necessarily see, smell, or taste them. They're basically invisible poisons that quietly wreak havoc on the body, and this is true for both women and men.

Industrial pollutants of nearly all kinds almost always have estrogen-mimicking properties which add to a woman's estrogen load. These include plastics chemicals like bisphenol-A (BPA), flame-retardant chemicals, pesticides and herbicides, and parabens. Many foods also contain phytoestrogenic compounds like isoflavones that, while they serve a purpose, can overwhelm the body's hormone stores. Such foods include soy and other legumes, alcohol (especially beer that contains hops), refined sugars, simple carbohydrates (especially those derived from processed grains), and conventional meat and dairy products that contain growth hormones and antibiotics.

Stress is another factor linked to estrogen dominance, and one that many people, both men and women, tend to overlook. It's a common misconception that our bodies are only limited in their potential by our reluctance to push them to the max. While there's something to be said for training hard – and I should know, being a former bodybuilder – there's even more to be said about making time for rest and relaxation, something that too many people in today's busy world fail to incorporate into their daily routines.

When a woman's body is constantly wound up in go, go, go mode, her adrenal glands can get overworked to the point that they no longer produce enough progesterone in relation to estrogen. Usually this is because her adrenals are instead having to produce cortisol (a "fight or flight" hormone) to offset all the

stress she's enduring. This throws off her progesterone-estrogen balance, typically swaying it in favor of estrogen.

Do You Have Adrenal Fatigue and Don't Even Know It?

We call this condition *adrenal fatigue*, or *adrenal burnout*. Because symptoms start out small and progress over time, many women don't even know that their stressful lifestyles are harming them in this manner. This is one of the biggest reasons why stress is arguably the most toxic "substance" in our modern lives.

In the same vein, not getting enough rest can also contribute to estrogen dominance. Irregular sleeping patterns and lack of sleep directly inhibit a woman's body from recharging its hormone stores. Inadequate sleep also negatively affects production of nighttime hormones like melatonin, a sleep hormone that actually helps to protect a woman's body against estrogen dominance.

Symptoms of High Estrogen Levels

So how do you know if you suffer from estrogen dominance? Generally speaking, it's kind of hard to miss. A healthy woman with balanced hormones will typically feel energetic, happy, and have a healthy sex drive. A woman with estrogen dominance, on the other hand, will feel the exact opposite: tired, moody, and sexually dormant.

This is obviously a blanket categorization that will vary from woman to woman, and from day to day for each woman. But the essence of what it means to be estrogen dominant is that a woman no longer feels like herself (and the same is true for women who don't have *enough* estrogen, by the way. Remember, it's all about balance.)

A woman may have increased troubles digesting her food, for instance, or notice that she's suddenly having a harder time sleeping (or perhaps staying awake), or maybe she no longer feels like exercising or even associating with her friends like she used to.

Interestingly enough, the symptoms of overly high estrogen levels in women tend to be many of the same signs that men experience when their bodies have too much estrogen as well. Things like loss of drive, both sexually and in daily life; difficulty concentrating; irritability; and chronic fatigue are just a few of the many personality changes that come to mind when a person's hormones are out of whack.

And then, there are the bodily changes. Estrogen dominance tends to manifest physically as increased body fat – especially around a woman's middle section – along with a corresponding loss of muscle mass. As it turns out, that extra flab that seems to pop up out of nowhere is often a direct cause, as well as a symptom, of estrogen dominance. Irregular periods, headaches, hair loss, and colder-than-normal extremities are further indicators that a woman's hormones are imbalanced.

Perhaps the most concerning symptoms of estrogen dominance are breast abnormalities. Women who develop sensitivity, swelling, or mysterious lumps in their breasts should not only take notice of a potential hormone imbalance, but also seek help in addressing it. If left unchecked, such symptoms have the potential to progress into full-blown breast cancer of the estrogen-positive type – a diagnosis that no woman wants to receive.

7 Helpful Tips to Avoid Estrogen Dominance

So what's a woman to do? Firstly, don't fret. I'm not trying to scare, worry, or add any more stress to your life. I simply want to inform you about this important subject of high estrogen level so that you can take the proper steps to hopefully avoid ever becoming estrogen dominant.

I've outlined some helpful tips for you below to get you started in limiting your estrogenic load. Tips which I hope will lead you to take other steps in supporting your body's innate ability to balance your hormones for health and longevity:

#1. Clean green – Take an inventory of everything you use around the house to tidy up and make sure that all of it is free of synthetic chemicals, fragrances, and other toxins. Many of these are easily identifiable because you often can't pronounce them. Think all-purpose cleaning sprays, hand soaps, laundry detergents, shampoos and conditioners, body washes, air fresheners – really anything that you apply to surfaces or to your body.

#2. Keep calm and carry on – If there's one thing I can't stress enough, it's that you shouldn't: stress, I mean. Chronic stress puts the body into emergency overdrive, zapping the hormones you need for life and health and replacing them with the hormones you need for survival (remember: fight-or-flight is the enemy of balanced hormones). Take time to rest, relax, and remember that anxiety and worry will never change anything except your metabolic state –and *not* for the better.

#3. Look out for your liver – It's important to recognize stress as an endocrine-disrupting toxin, and that your liver is the primary organ responsible for eradicating the damage it causes (as well as the damage caused by other EDCs). But it can't do this if you drink lots of alcohol or otherwise fail to keep your liver in tip-top shape. Detoxifying your liver from time to time and consuming a diet that helps support its optimal function will go a long way in helping you to balance your hormones and avoid estrogen dominance.

#4. Eat right – This means consuming plenty of fiber, especially the insoluble kind that binds to excess estrogen in the digestive tract so it can be expelled from the body. Consuming only organic or certified pesticide- and herbicide-free produce is further advisable, as is sticking with grass-fed, pastured meats and dairy products, and avoiding excess carbs and sugar.

#5. Skip the soy – There's a lot of confusion about this one because soy was marketed for so long as a "health food." But the truth is that soy, especially in its unfermented state, is a highly estrogenic food that can severely disrupt one's hormone balance. This is amplified when the soy being consumed is genetically-modified – which is the case for most soy on the market today – as this transgenic food is typically doused in xenoestrogenic chemicals like Roundup (glyphosate) prior to harvest. Traditional *fermented* soy products made with non-GMO soy are generally considered okay in small quantities.

#6. Movement. Keeping your body moving will help to boost human growth hormone (HGH) while neutralizing and expelling excess estrogen and other toxins from the body. Especially when combined with a healthy diet, exercise can help to shed excess fat, which is where estrogen tends to lodge itself and wreak havoc.

#7. Keep your belly bugs happy – Part of eating healthy means taking care of your gut microbiota. I'm talking about the vibrant probiotic colonies that live inside your small intestine, and that help digest your



food, absorb nutrients, protect against pathogenic invaders, and regulate hormone production and expression. Processed food, chemical toxins, and other factors can damage healthy bacteria and compromise digestion, leading to a buildup of estrogen. This is why I often recommend probiotic foods and supplements to help support a healthy rebalancing of the gut.