

DR. MICHAEL WALD'S

Q&A



NATURAL Hormones

1. True or false: The term "natural hormones" implies that the hormones given are all derived from plant sources?

Answer: Not really. The term "natural hormones" is a misnomer. There are no natural hormones found in plants such as soy or red clover or wild yam, for example. There are hormonal-like molecules in plants that have chemical structures resembling hormones, but they do not necessarily act as hormones in humans, although they may. However, these compounds may also act as hormone blockers. These plant hormone-precursors must be converted in a laboratory with a certain enzyme not found in humans.

2. True or false: The term bioidentical hormone is a more appropriate term describing hormones that are exactly the same in structure as those found in women and men?

Answer: True. The term "bioidentical" means the hormone is identical to those found in humans, even though it may be synthesized in a laboratory. Therefore, bioidentical hormones can be synthetic.

3. True or false: Bio-identical hormones carry some potential risk of adverse reactions and serious disease such as cancer.

Answer: Yes. Bioidentical hormones are still hormones and, although weaker than non-bioidentical synthetic hormones, may still cause problems in some individuals.

4. True or false: Saliva testing is the best way to check hormone needs?

Answer: Absolutely False. Saliva is said to be the best test for some hormones, but a combination of blood work and urine testing and, most importantly, careful consultation and a look at other organ systems, all work together to best determine one's hormone needs. Besides, it is an out-of-pocket expense to pay for saliva DHEA and testosterone while both of these hormones are equally well measured in blood (some hormones are not equally valid when tested in blood) and are covered by most insurances. Many people are surprised to learn that bioidentical hormones are usually recommended based on symptoms and other non-hormone tests as opposed to merely measuring blood, urine or saliva hormone levels.

5. True or false: Cortisol is a stress hormone. Salivary, cortisol and DHEA testing should be performed to check for the health of the adrenal glands?

Answer: False. More accurate testing is available.

6. True or false: The best way to fix hormone imbalances is to give bioidentical hormones?

Answer: Not necessarily. Many factors in life affect hormone levels other than hormones themselves. Hormone levels change in the body in response to pollution, psychological and physical stress, exercise, diet, vitamins, minerals, herbs, medications and many other factors.

7. True or false: If one has low levels of hormones such as DHEA, progesterone and testosterone, they should be fixed by giving bioidentical hormones?

Answer: Not necessarily. The body may reduce the production of these hormones, while creating unpleasant symptoms, as a protective mechanism. For example, fatigue and loss of libido caused by a drop in testosterone may reduce one's risk of developing breast cancer and ovarian cancer (as testosterone is a precursor to estradiol).

Comment: As you can see, managing hormone imbalances may involve more than just addressing the hormone levels themselves or providing bioidentical hormones. A careful nutritional and medical consultation is the best "integrated" way towards balancing hormones and improving longevity and quality of life.

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