

Many women are suffering from symptoms that they may not understand, and may feel powerless to stop. These symptoms can be overwhelming, both physically and emotionally, as they come from a system that influences the entire body at a core level, and contributes to what makes a woman uniquely female. In the beginning stages, these symptoms include menstrual cramps, prolonged periods, mood swings and depression, weight gain and the inability to lose weight (hormones are stronger than diet!), carbohydrate cravings, migraines, insomnia, decreased sex drive, and muscle aches and pains. Allowing the condition to advance can result in endometriosis, thyroid dysfunction, ovarian cysts, uterine fibroids, cystic breasts, infertility, gall bladder problems (possible removal), cancer (breast, uterine, cervical, or ovarian), and autoimmune disorders. There is one type of hormone imbalance, termed estrogen dominance, which is at the heart of these conditions. It is relatively easy to treat through natural means and can be done without the use of hormone therapy, either natural or synthetic.

The endocrine system is one of the major control systems of the body. It uses hormones, which are powerful biochemical messengers to control specific functions. The hormones work together in a delicate balance, in a way that is complex and not fully understood in medical research. The only true expert on hormonal balance is your body itself. Your body is constantly trying to keep the hormones at proper levels, but can become overwhelmed by interference from a variety of sources. Considering the delicate balance of this system, it is one of the first systems to be influenced by nutritional deficiencies, toxicity, and other types of stress. This is what happens in the case of estrogen dominance.

Estrogen dominance is an imbalance between the hormones estrogen and progesterone, and is marked by too much estrogen in comparison to progesterone. Birth control pills and injections are often given to relieve the symptoms of estrogen dominance while leaving the underlying cause uncorrected and making the situation worse. They contain synthetic estrogens and progestins that prevent ovulation and promote an estrogen dominant state (why they are linked to breast cancer, blood clots, etc). They work by suppressing (not regulating!) your hypothalamus and pituitary glands, which are glands in the brain that direct the endocrine system. In other words, they take over and replace your “control center”. When this occurs, it may or may not “turn back on” by itself when the pills are removed, and can cause infertility and difficulty in becoming pregnant. A case example of estrogen dominance out of control is that of a woman who was prescribed birth control pills due to painful periods and heavy bleeding. The pills relieved the symptoms temporarily, while making the underlying condition worse. The pills became less effective, and she was given contraceptive injections. After several injections, she was diagnosed with endometriosis and had menstrual bleeding for up to 4 weeks at a time. She underwent balloon ablation to stop the bleeding. She still experienced painful cramping, so a partial hysterectomy was scheduled. Upon performance, both ovaries also had to be removed because they were destroyed by endometriosis. It doesn't have to end that way!!

The alternative is a case of a woman who experienced painful, long periods. She was taking large amounts of over the counter pain pills in order to be able to function, and her only other option seemed to be birth control pills. Her periods began up to last 14 days and she became worried. She was evaluated holistically, as with any other

condition, by assessing structural, chemical, and emotional causes. Her pelvis was aligned, removing torque on the uterus. She was given diet changes and a detoxification program, as well as supplements that are designed to support and heal the endocrine glands and tissues, allowing the body to balance itself. The emotional component was addressed through the acupuncture meridian system, allowing her to release stored emotions. Her periods are now a normal length with minimal cramps, and more importantly, her system is in balance to prevent more serious complications and conditions. As this case illustrates, there is help available that works with your body, rather than against it.

**Bio:** Dr. Anne Roulo is a holistic chiropractor who practices in St. Louis at Integrative Healing Arts. She specializes in an advanced form of kinesiology designed to identify the cause of your condition resolve it more completely. In addition to working with female hormonal imbalances, Dr. Roulo treats a wide variety of conditions, ranging from athletic injuries to wellness care. For a consultation call 314.644.2070.