

Men and Women's Health

Genesis 1:26-28 "Let us make man in Our image (a spiritual personality with moral likeness)So God created man in His own image, in the image and likeness of God He created them, *male and female* He created them. And God blessed them and said, "be fruitful and multiply..."

When we talk about Men and Women's Health the first few things that typically come to mind is "breast and prostate health". I want to take that a step further and discuss a deeper issue, Hormone Health. I think it's clear that without hormones we would not have *male and female* as we know them. I'm not sure what we would have but it would certainly be interesting. Anyway, hormone health is very important to our overall spiritual, mental and physical health and this month we will be discussing those issues.



When you look across this great country it isn't hard to see that we appear to be in a real identity crisis. Not just the current crisis of whether we are a free country or not, but a crisis that started even before that, a crisis of *male and female* identity.

If you are a blessed parent, or an aunt or uncle of boys and girls, it's not hard to see that they are completely different. God designed it that way. Girls are "sugar and spice and all things nice" and boys are "made of snakes and snails and puppy dog tails" at least that's what the old rhyme tells us. The interesting thing is hormones will tell us that those instincts for boys and girls are very real. Dr James Dobson in his books "Bringing up Boys" and "Bringing up Girls" tells us that this is our identity "set in motion at conception". Boys are loud, rowdy, rough, they like their trucks, cars and all the noises they come along with them. They laugh at body noises. I know grown men that still laugh at those sounds. I don't get it, but for some bizarre reason they think it's funny. Dr Dobson states in his book about girls that "the brains of both sexes appear to be similar until about the 8th week, when a male brain is "washed" by a huge surge of testosterone where it is transformed radically. The male sex hormone kills some of the communication cells that connect the right side of the brain where emotion is processed and left hemisphere of the brain where language is focused. The network survives the bath of testosterone but will forever change the "cross-talk" of the brain. Testosterone increases the number of neurons and circuits located in the boy's sex and aggression center. With 20x's more testosterone than his female counterpart it's a no wonder we see the rough and tumble, grabbing hair, toys guns, (made even from bananas and cucumber in a pinch if they need to) to jumping off the highest place just to see if they can- boys. Boys are fiercely loyal, adventurers, protectors and warriors. They are our boys.

Girls, on the other hand, like pretty things, they like pink and lace, are more emotional, and are often quieter and more reserved than boys. They cry at movies and cry when they see someone else cry and they sing lullabies to dolls and even a cat that will lie still. This is the work of estrogen. Dobson describes girls, "because the female brain does not have the comparable surge of testosterone that boys do, the communication and emotional centers of the brain remain intact. In fact, they grow larger. This center is called the corpus callosum and is 25% larger than her male counterpart. It becomes a super-highway capable of carrying great quantities of emotional information from one side of the brain to another. (For boys it is a country road.) This makes girls more expressive and emotional even from birth. She feels more deeply and is much more in tune to the environment around her. She cries more often, even as an adult. She is a girl. As testosterone washes a male brain early in life, so estrogen does to a girl between 6-30 months, much the levels comparable to an adult. Did you ever hear a mother say, "she's 2 going on 18"? This surge of estrogen is why. This work of the "intimacy" hormone creates a bonding, cuddling, nurturing and communicative young girl and woman. She is a friend, a lover, a feeler, a talker, and even a bit of a conniver at times. She is a woman.

As adults and young adults, what happens when our hormones are not balanced as they should be?

Our bodies were created to live in homeostasis (balance). Before I lose some of you, here me out. Our bodies are constantly fighting to stay in this place. It helps keep us from disease and body system breakdown. It works to maintain body temperature, PH, heart and respiratory rate, blood sugars, and blood pressure and our hormones to name a few.

Testosterone- low levels can cause feelings of depression, lack of concentration, mood changes, low libido, fatigue, abdominal fat, moobs, low muscle tone, and insomnia. These same symptoms can be for women as well.

Estrogen and progesterone- low levels in women cause symptoms of headache, fatigue, hot flashes, mood swings, memory lapses, muscle weakness, arrhythmias, anxiety and infections. These hormones can be out of balance at any point in our lives but certainly we see them shift in midlife if not before. Women are at a higher risk of depression than their male counterparts after menopause as a result of low hormone levels. You're not crazy. These hormones are real and can cause great distress if they are unbalanced.

Why are we unbalanced? Here are a few reasons:

1. Chronic stress- from any source, physical or emotional
2. Poor nutrition and eating habits
3. Low vitamin D levels
4. Imbalanced gut microflora/bacteria
5. Weight gain
6. Inadequate exercise
7. Prescription drugs- especially statins

How do we recover those needed levels?

1. Reduce stress
2. Eat nutritious foods and intermittent fasting
3. Eat good fats found in animals, and fish, nuts, seeds and avocados. Use coconut and olive oils.
4. Kick the sugar and refined food habit
5. Exercise- (interval and heavy weight training for men)
6. Get good quality sleep
7. Lower your body fat
8. Get out in the sun for some Vitamin D health- (mid-day without sunscreen for about 15 minutes/day. Show some skin.) and supplements as needed with your Doctors direction.
9. Liver detox

Starting to all sound familiar? I think you are starting to see that healthy habits are priceless for all areas of life: Mentally, Physically and Spiritually. Again, good health does not have to cost a fortune. Good common sense and self-control go a LONG way.

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

Sometimes our struggles are not a hormone imbalance but an identity crisis. As parents or mentors of boys and girls, I encourage you to let boys be boys and girls be girls. Boys and men will never fully understand the wiring of women with emotions and our needs to communication and our moodiness at times. Girls and women will never fully understand a man's need to be in the woods, alone, in a tree stand, for hours on end and their ability to have a “nothing” box in their head to spend time in. We have never been called to be the other. The most contented at peace persons are those that embrace their identity, as God biologically created, and live fully in it.

We will have continued conversations this month on sexuality and identity. Watch your mailboxes for continued articles on Men and Women's Biblical role within the home. **(Ouch! WARNING: it will not be politically correct BUT it will be Biblical.)**

Blessing,

Juanita for *Faith and Health*

References:

DrAxe.com

Dr James Dobson “Bringing up Boys” and “Bringing up Girls”