Hormones play vital roles in body systems – they’re chemical messengers that relay signals from one cell to another. Even slight fluctuations in the amount or type of hormones produced by the body can trigger big changes – not just to cells but to the functioning of the whole body.

Hormonal ups and downs are a fact of life for women at every age and every stage. For women, the main sex hormones are oestrogen and progesterone. The monthly hormonal fluctuations that trigger menstruation and can also produce symptoms of premenstrual syndrome (PMS). Not all women experience PMS – the symptoms are different for every woman and can range from slight tension to extreme tearfulness. Heightened hormonal changes during the menstrual period and post-menstrual time can trigger unwanted symptoms too. Plus, hormonal imbalances towards the end of a woman’s reproductive life, the peri-menopause and the menopause, can also trigger unwanted symptoms like hot flushes.

So what can you do?

For both PMS and menopause, hormone replacement therapy (HRT) in the form of tablets or patches can help. But there are herbal based treatments, too.

Herbalists have been using herbs and plant compounds to treat hormonal problems for centuries. But scientific interest in phytoestrogens (which literally means plant oestrogens) was sparked relatively recently. It happened when researchers noticed that women in Asian countries had far fewer symptoms of menopause compared with women in western countries.

A major reason for this, they suggested, could be the larger quantities of phytoestrogens and other plant chemicals eaten as part of traditional Eastern diets. Phytoestrogens are natural herbal compounds thought to mimic oestrogen.

Phytoestrogens are thought to have weak oestrogen-like effects and so, dietary phytoestrogens may also help to relieve symptoms associated with hormonal cycles in the child-bearing years, during peri-menopause and after menopause too, when levels of oestrogen and progesterone drop. After menopause, phytoestrogens together with regular exercise, may help to maintain healthy bone mass.

If you’re looking for a more natural alternative, read on!
**Black cohosh**

First used in its native North America to treat conditions that affect women’s reproductive organs, black cohosh has traditionally been used to ease symptoms relating to menstrual problems and inflammation of the uterus or ovaries.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists stated that black cohosh may help women with vasomotor symptoms (symptoms that affect the diameter or blood vessels) of menopause and has been found to be both safe and effective.

**Dong quai**

Sometimes called the female ginseng, dong quai has been used for centuries in Traditional Chinese Medicine. Combined with other herbs, dong quai is most often used to treat women’s reproductive problems, to relieve cramps associated with painful periods and to improve circulation. According to the US National Institutes of Health, dong quai has been used for both PMS and menopausal symptoms.

**Liquorice root**

Liquorice is used in traditional Chinese medicine as ‘Qi’ tonic, and has been used as an anti-inflammatory agent.

**Chasteberry**

Used for thousands of years mostly by women to ease menstrual problems and to ease breast pain, chasteberry continues to be used for menstrual problems, such as PMS, as well as for symptoms of menopause.

According to Victoria Zak writing in 20,000 Secrets of Tea, chasteberry is a popular remedy for the emotional symptoms of pre-menstrual syndrome as it works to calm ‘wild emotions’. Specifically, chasteberry has been used to improve emotional symptoms such as depression, tension and distress.

One study published in the prestigious *British Medical Journal* in 2001, *Treatment for the Premenstrual Syndrome with Agnus castus Fruit Extract: Prospective, Randomised, Placebo Controlled Study* showed significant improvement in PMS symptoms when using chasteberry extract over three menstrual cycles.

**Other ways to protect your health:**

- Enjoy at least two fruits and five vegetable servings daily.

- Protect your bones by:
  - Ensuring an adequate intake of calcium from low-fat dairy foods and calcium enriched soya products.
  - A high intake of animal protein has been found to cause heavy excretion of calcium in urine, so replace some of your dietary protein of meat and eggs with soya products such as tofu.
  - A combination of calcium and vitamin D is important for helping to prevent the bone loss associated with menopause.
  - Try nuts – they contain magnesium, a mineral that has been shown to low in around half of menopausal women. Magnesium helps the body absorb calcium.

*Foods that contain phytoestrogens*

Traditional Far Eastern diets are rich in dietary phytoestrogens and eating a diet that’s rich in these may explain why hot flushes and other menopausal symptoms seem to be fewer in cultures that traditionally eat plenty of plant-based foods. Good food sources include:

- **Soy** including tofu, tempeh, roasted soy nuts, edamame, soy oil, soy milk, soy flour, miso and soy cheese. Some clinical studies have shown benefits from eating soy foods, but you have to eat quite large amounts to see the best benefits – around 2-3 cups daily. The active components of soy are isoflavones.

- **Other legumes** (peas, beans and lentils) and especially mung beans.

- **Flaxseeds** which contain lignans, another form of phytoestrogens. Lignans are a type of polyphenol (phytoestrogen) that can mimic oestrogen. Try cold pressed flaxseed oil for salads or grind one or two tablespoons of seeds and sprinkle over breakfast cereals and salads or stir into yoghurt and smoothies.

- **Whole grains** such as rye and products that contain it such as some soy and linseed breads.
• Switch to unsaturated fats from olive oil and opt for two to three portions of oily, omega-3 rich fish each week – great for heart health!

• Don’t smoke.

• Watch your alcohol intake.

• Get enough rest.

• Exercise regularly – physical exercise reduces the frequency and severity of hot flushes and studies show regular exercise significantly improves emotional and physical wellbeing. Exercise also burns calories so you can help to control and/or maintain a healthy weight and a more toned shape.

About PhytElle™

To give you additional support to help combat PMS and menopausal symptoms, USANA’s PhytElle™ is a great choice!

PhytElle™ is a carefully formulated collection of plant herbs and plant compounds in concentrations designed to reduce unwanted symptoms associated with women’s hormonal changes.

PhytElle™ also contains a combination of herbs that complements the activity of the soy isoflavones: black cohosh, dong quai, liquorice-root extract and chasteberry powder. Together with the isoflavones, these herbs provide support during menstruation and in the peri- and post-menopausal years.

Dosage: Take three PhytElle™ tablets spread evenly throughout the day, preferably with meals.

USANA PhytElle™ for Women (90 tablets/bottle)

(USANA Australia and New Zealand Item: 129)

• Provides a broad-spectrum comprehensive formula containing phytoestrogens from soy.

• Contains all-natural plant based ingredients with guaranteed high levels of soy isoflavones.

• Addresses a number of women’s health issues relating to hormonal changes and hormone release patterns.

• Helps in the maintenance or improvement of general well-being

• Provides relief of menstrual symptoms and pre-menstrual symptoms / syndrome (PMS)

• Helps support women’s health during menopause, providing relief of menopausal symptoms, and relief from hot flushes associated with menopause

• Supports bone health in menopausal women.

USE ONLY AS DIRECTED. ALWAYS READ THE LABEL.

Note: if you are pregnant, consult your physician before taking this product.
If you have any concerns or are taking any medications, talk it over with your doctor, and tell him about any supplements you take, so he can check on drug interactions.

PhytElle™ is laboratory tested, quality guaranteed. Meets British Pharmacopoeia (BP) specifications for potency, uniformity and disintegration where applicable.

HRT explained

Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) involves taking hormones in the form of tablets or patches prescribed by your doctor. This treatment can be very effective at relieving the symptoms of menopause if they are particularly distressing. Others prefer a more natural approach using plant hormones to help reduce unwanted symptoms.

What is menopause?

This is a natural and normal process which begins anywhere between the mid forties and the mid fifties. A woman’s ovaries gradually produce less and less of the female sex hormones, and this eventually leads to the ending of menstruation. A woman is menopausal when she hasn’t had a period for a year or so.

The transition period is called peri-menopause and it is still possible to get pregnant during peri-menopause because although menstruation is less predictable, the ovaries still produce female sex hormones.

The falling and fluctuating levels of female hormones trigger several symptoms ranging from mood swings to night sweats and hot flushes.

After menopause, the reduced oestrogen levels contribute to the raised incidence of heart disease and loss of bone density in women.
FAQs

Is PhytElle™ suitable for use during chemotherapy for breast cancer?
PhytElle™ is not suitable for use in hormone-sensitive conditions such as breast cancer, uterine cancer, ovarian cancer, endometriosis or uterine fibroids. The active ingredients in PhytElle act like oestrogen in the body and so if you have any condition that could be made worse by oestrogen, don’t use plant oestrogen-containing products like PhytElle.

Can PhytElle™ be used to help younger women with menstrual problems?
PhytElle contains herbs and phytoestrogens and can be used to help younger women with severe PMS symptoms, although generally recommended for women 35 and over.

I am taking hormonal treatment – can I still take PhytElle?
If you are using hormonal treatments such as the contraceptive pill, fertility medicines, HRT, etc. PhytElle is not recommended. Consult your doctor for a recommendation specific to you.

Can eating diet rich in phytoestrogens reduce breast cancer risk?
Conditions like cancer have a number of causes and experts say that the evidence between a link between phytoestrogens and breast cancer is not conclusive. More research is needed before we can be sure if eating a diet rich in phytoestrogens can cut the risk of developing breast cancer.

I am taking hormone therapy for breast cancer – is it safe to eat phytoestrogens?
There is no conclusive evidence about whether women with or without a history of breast cancer should alter their consumption of foods that contain phytoestrogens. And, the effects of the short- and long-term use of these supplements are not certain. So, the best option is to enjoy foods that contain phytoestrogens like peas and beans as part of a healthy, mixed diet. Talk to your doctor for more advice.

Can I take PhytElle whilst breastfeeding?
No – PhytElle contains multiple herbs which are not generally recommended for use during breastfeeding.

References


