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Healing Hormones

THERE'S A LOT TO LEARN about our bodies' hormones, their effects and how you can get your body to make more of the substances that will make you feel better! Now that you have learned about what your body produces and how your behavior can affect your hormones and therefore your mood and overall feeling of well-being, here is an overview, hormone by hormone, that you can use to guide yourself in taking charge of your body and improving your own health.

Hormone	Effects	How to Boost
Nitric Oxide	Widens blood vessels, improves blood flow; prevents oxygen starvation; improves heart health; prevents strokes and heart attacks; fights infection; improves sexual response.	Increase arginine intake by eating more vegetables and nuts, garlic, onion, cold-water fish, eggs, chicken, green tea; exercise to get your heart beating faster.

Dopamine	Affects movement, emotions, memory, experience of pleasure; fights depression; boosts motivation; provides emotional balance.	Get more tyrosine from protein-rich foods and such fruits and vegetables as bananas and avocados, plus dairy products; exercise at least 20-30 minutes/day; have more sex; avoid foods high in cholesterol and added sugar; consider supplements of vitamins A, B6, C and E.
Endorphins	Create calm; relieve pain; encourage dopamine production.	Laugh or anticipate laughing; exercise at enough intensity to produce “runner’s high”; massage therapy; acupuncture; inhale odors of vanilla and lavender; eat ginseng.

Serotonin	Relaxation and contentment; “happy hormone”; restful sleep; feelings of being at peace with the environment; protects against depression; improves social life.	Consume tryptophan-rich foods such as seafood, turkey, chicken, milk, eggs, nuts and other protein sources.
Oxytocin	Sexual bonding; pair attachment; mother-child connection; feelings of calm and security; promotes in-group attachment at the expense of out-group; boosts sensitivity to positive social cues.	Be affectionate with your partner in public and private; touch frequently; increase sexual foreplay; think pleasant thoughts; interact with a pet, especially through touch.

Testosterone (men)	Maintains bone density; manages fat distribution; maintains muscle strength & mass; affects red-blood-cell production; promotes sex drive & sperm production.	Supplements available as injections, pellets, patches or gels, but generally not recommended for men whose levels are normal for their age.
Estrogen (women)	Can relieve symptoms of menopause, decrease some women's heart-disease risk, help prevent osteoporosis.	Systemic supplements available as pills, skin patches, gels, creams or sprays. Long-term use not recommended & must be carefully supervised. Low-dose vaginal products are generally safe & effective for vaginal menopausal symptoms and some urinary symptoms—available as creams, tablets or rings.

Human Growth Hormone	Increases bone density and muscle mass, decreases body fat, boosts exercise capacity—but only in people with a deficiency.	Injections available only by prescription and must be medically administered. Claims for supposed pill form not supported by science.
DHEA	Regulates production of testosterone, estrogen & other hormones; helps relieve depression, treat schizophrenia, improves aging skin, may relieve lupus symptoms, improves bone-density. Effects not fully known. May increase effects and side effects of many medicines.	Eat a healthful diet and exercise regularly. Available as a nutritional supplement, without a prescription, in the United States. So-called natural alternatives to synthetic DHEA—such as soy and wild yam—are not effective.

IMPORTANT: Even when hormone supplements are available without a prescription, that does not mean they are safe for everyone under all circumstances. Always discuss it with your doctor before taking any hormone supplement.