

Weight Loss Trouble? 'Reset' Your Hormones

When it comes to losing weight, the body can have a gender bias. According to one physician, hormone imbalances put women at a disadvantage. But women can possibly hit a hormone reset button and still shed those unwanted pounds.

Laurie Mazzone is living proof it works. After years of frustration, the New York City hair stylist found a way to reclaim her high school figure. Resetting her hormones helped her lose 11 pounds in just three weeks, followed by another seven, and she's not done.

"I lost four inches off my waist. Four inches in a month is unbelievable. I had not seen that kind of result in anything that I've done," Mazzone said.

On a Hunch

Mazzone balanced her hormones under the direction of San Francisco gynecologist Sara Gottfried. The Harvard and . educated physician lost 25 pounds when she first tried it on herself.

But it didn't start out that way. At first, when she was 25 pounds overweight, Dr. Gottfried went to a fellow physician who told her to eat less and exercise more.

Since she already had a pretty healthy diet and was a runner, she didn't accept his advice. Then she saw another physician who prescribed an antidepressant, a treatment she also rejected.

As a physician, Dr. Gottfried had a hunch her problem might be hormonal. She tested her hormone levels, something no other doctor thought to do, and as it turns out, her hormone levels

were all off the charts: either way too high or way too low.

Using her medical expertise, she discovered a natural way to balance her hormones, and as a result, lost the weight. Now she feels great. Gottfried realized other women needed to know what she found out.

“I started to share it with women in my practice,” she recalled. “And the results were amazing. Women lost on average about 15 pounds; they dropped their blood sugar by 21 points; they lost four inches off their waist. We now have had 5,000 people go through this program.”

Balancing Act

If one or more of seven key hormones is out of whack, forget about losing weight. But the good news is we can balance them—with our fork.

Specific foods can disrupt hormone levels. That can be fixed by avoiding the disruptive food for at least three days.

In her book, *The Hormone Reset Diet*, Dr. Gottfried lays out a 21-day plan for seven weight-related hormones.

Mazzone liked the fact that she could ease into a new routine.

“It was gradual. It wasn’t like a shock to my system. It wasn’t like, ‘Ok, now you’re off all these foods at once,’ and it wasn’t overwhelming. It was done in small little bits and pieces,” she said.

Mazzone started by giving up red meat and alcohol, which can raise estrogen.

Dr. Gottfried explained the role of the hormone.

“Estrogen is what makes us feminine. It gives us breasts and hips. But when it’s out of whack, when it’s too high relative to progesterone, it’s going to make you have weight loss

resistance. You're not going to be able to lose weight no matter what," Gottfried explained.

There are, however, substitutes that Mazzone found extremely helpful.

"When I came home at night I would get a wine glass and I would just fill it with seltzer and apple cider vinegar and I felt like I was drinking wine," she said.

While still avoiding red meat and alcohol, for the next three days Mazzone eliminated fruit from her diet in order to reset the hormone Leptin, which, according to Dr. Gottfried, has a big impact on our weight.

"It's the satiety hormone. And that means it controls your hunger," she explained.

While still avoiding red meat, now for six days, and fruit for three days, Laurie added caffeine to the "off limits" list because it can disrupt the hormone cortisol.

"Cortisol is the main stress hormone," Gottfried said. "And when it's too high, it grows this muffin-top. It just gives you belly fat that you can't get rid of."

Mazzone was afraid she wouldn't be able to handle going without coffee, but she was pleasantly surprised.

"So once I came off the caffeine I was sleeping like a baby," she said.

The thyroid is another hormone that causes women lots of problems. Dr. Gottfried said for optimal health we need to be in the "Goldilocks" range: not too high, not too low.

"Some of the common symptoms are thinning hair, weight gain – typically 10, 20 pounds – fatigue, depression. It can also give you a sense of being puffy—you know, fluid retention, which I think is really common," she said.

In order to reset your thyroid, go without grains. That was a tall order for Mazzone.

"I grew up in an Italian family and they serve you like a half a pound of pasta. So I was dying. 'How am I going to do that?'" she said. She did it by eating pasta substitutes, such as spaghetti squash, shredded zucchini or Shriataki noodles.

Next, avoid sweets to balance insulin. Mazzone said this takes discipline, but only at first.

"The sugar cravings were completely gone after four days," she recalled. "And I was really addicted to sugar!"

Abstain from milk products to reset your growth hormone.

"Dairy I thought would be hard for me because I like cheese so much," Mazzone confessed. "But I replaced it with hummus and I was fine. I didn't even miss it."

Finally, avoid environmental toxins, such as plastic and certain cosmetics to balance testosterone levels. Dr. Gottfried says most women don't realize how we are bombarded with toxins in our everyday life, such as in our beauty and healthcare products.

"The average woman puts on about 515 synthetic chemicals on her skin," she said.

Blank Canvas Experiment

After avoiding those seven categories or foods, your hormones are now reset. You don't necessarily have to avoid these foods forever. The way to determine which ones are ok for you to eat, and which ones aren't, is to add one food back every three days while closely monitoring how your body responds to it. Everyone is different.

"Then you feel like a blank canvas," Mazzone said. "And you've gotten rid of all these foods and you feel so great. And then

you get to bring them back and see what happens. And that's kind of interesting."

When she resumed eating red meat, there was no change in her body, so it's still on the menu.

Dairy, however, brought a different result. She gained five pounds in just three days after adding it back to her diet. That was a clear sign that she needed to stay away from dairy for good.

"I felt like I was doing a science project on myself," she said.

That was just the beginning.

"I missed my caffeine, I thought," Mazzone said. "So I had a cup of coffee. And that night I didn't sleep. And that was it. I just never had it again."

So for women, hormones often dictate whether the body will burn fat or hold on to it. By replacing disruptive foods with healthy substitutions, we gain another weapon in the battle of the bulge.