

PROGESTERONE

Progesterone is a steroid reproductive hormone produced in your ovary after ovulation. It's beneficial for mood, metabolism and bones. It's also highly beneficial for your period. In fact, you could say that when it comes to period health, **it's all about progesterone.**

The second half of your cycle, from ovulation to the start of your period is progesterone dominant. Progesterone peaks in the middle of your luteal phase elevating your temperature by approx. 0.3°C, resulting in higher temperatures for 10-14 days. If your temperature rises but you do not experience menstruation, it may indicate pregnancy.

In the absence of an increase in temperature, it signifies an anovulatory cycle, during which your body does not produce any progesterone.

Progesterone deficiency is the most common hormonal deficiency in women of all ages.

Low progesterone is associated with:

- PCOS
- Breakthrough bleeding (spotting) in the 2nd half of your cycle
- Difficulty staying pregnant
- PMS
- Premenstrual headaches and migraines
- Heavy menstrual flow
- Irregular cycles or more frequent cycles
- Short luteal phase or no luteal phase (should last at least 12 days)
- Bloating and/or water retention
- Swollen breasts, accompanied by tenderness or pain
- Clumsiness or poor co-ordination
- Itchy or restless legs, particularly at night
- Difficulty sleeping and irritability
- Ovarian cysts, breast cysts, fibroids or endometrial polyps
- Perimenopause
- Impaired fertility

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Increasing progesterone levels hinges on maintaining consistent monthly ovulation, and to achieve this you must prioritise your overall health. Ovulation serves as your monthly report card. Any current progesterone deficiency could be the result of stress or inadequate nutrition that began months ago. Sufficient progesterone production means being consistently healthy and well-nourished for at least 120 days.

To support ovulation you **must** identify and address underlying barriers, such as stress, inflammation, thyroid issues(hypothyroidism), insulin resistance, nutrient deficiencies (take adequate magnesium, vitamin B6, vitamin C, vitamin A, zinc) and inadequate calorie intake. As a woman, you need more food than you've been led to believe. It's common the week before your period you crave carbohydrates and your blood sugar naturally elevates. This is a normal response from your body to ensure you have all the right components to make progesterone.

Foods to support progesterone production:

White/red/sweet potatoes, beets, turnips, fennel, pumpkin, butternut squash, brussels sprouts, cauliflower, broccoli, bananas, mangoes, papaya, sunflower, flax and sesame seeds, oranges, grapefruit, lemons, limes, chickpeas, kidney beans, black beans.

Prioritise good sleep, reduce your caffeine intake, watch your exercise: over exercising can reduce your progesterone levels.

Sunlight is crucial for hormonal balance so make sure that you get 15 mins first thing in the morning...it's also a great start to the day !!

Hanging out with your mates....don't underestimate this one. Happiness triggers progesterone.

Other useful supplements to consider: Vitex Agnus Castus, maca, evening primrose oil and melatonin. Taking bioidentical progesterone from ovulation to the start of your period.

Try acupuncture it sends blood flow directly to the ovaries and supports progesterone production.

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

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The most effective approach to assess your progesterone levels involves monitoring basal body temperature. Alternatively, serum progesterone levels can be measured through a blood test. By definition, your mid-luteal day is approx. seven days after ovulation and seven days before your next expected period.

If you test at the right time (after ovulation) then it should be at least 3ng/mL (9.5nmol/L). If it's below that, then you either did not ovulate and can be suggestive of impaired fertility or you tested at the wrong time. A good progesterone reading is 10ng/mL (30nmol/L) and it can be higher. In fact, the higher the better ! I personally like to see it at 40nmol/L and above.

It's important to mention that if you are using any form of hormonal birth control, **progesterone is not present**, as contraceptive medications inhibit ovulation and progestin (synthetic progesterone) is not equivalent to natural progesterone.

Progesterone is often referred to as '**the hormone of pregnancy**' as it plays a pivotal role in achieving and maintaining a pregnancy. As well as preparing the endometrium for a possible pregnancy, progesterone inhibits T cell activity by working as an immuno-suppressant. Consequently, low levels of progesterone during the first eight weeks of pregnancy indicate a strong likelihood of miscarriage. Progesterone therapy can help offset this imbalance, modulate the immune response, restore a health ovulatory pattern and altogether make the body more baby-friendly.

So, there you have it, a comprehensive guide to help you understand the importance of progesterone and how to increase your levels naturally.

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Shoot me a DM to see how I can help you.