

## **Progesterone vs. Progestins: Which One is Safer and More Effective?**

Women often ask me, during a consult, questions related to the birth control pill or the hormone replacement therapy they were given following a hysterectomy or natural menopause. Often women are given artificial hormones as a treatment for symptoms associated with hormonal imbalance. Unfortunately, due to the distinct differences between artificial hormone options and bio-identical hormone replacement therapy the symptoms that drove the need for treatment are often worsened, the woman experiences intolerable side effects, or is putting herself at risk for certain cancers.

Progestin is an artificial replacement for natural progesterone. It competes for the same receptors in the body and sends the same message to the brain. Progestin tells the brain that there is enough progesterone in the body so the brain sends a message to stop the natural production of progesterone. The problem is it does not have the same affect within the body and the target organs; therefore, responses within the body vary significantly. In addition, it can compound the problem of estrogen dominance for many women making original symptoms into a larger concern.

**Birth Control Pills** are a progestin and estrogen combination. Teenage girls and young women are often placed on oral contraceptive to decrease symptoms associated with the menstrual cycle including: PMS, headaches, acne, and depression. These symptoms are related to a progesterone deficiency and estrogen dominance. Suppressing ovulation and adding estrogen exacerbates progesterone deficiency and estrogen dominance, the two imbalances responsible for the symptoms. A safer, more effective way to manage PMS is to supplement the body with what is missing-**natural progesterone**.

**Menopause (natural or surgically induced by hysterectomy)**-women are often prescribed hormone replacements to help alleviate the discomforts associated with menopause. The hormones prescribed by most physicians are equine based (derived from horse urine). Often women are placed on hormone therapy prior to having any hormone testing done. Some women are placed on estrogen only. Research has demonstrated the equine estrogen alone and equine estrogen in combination with progestin presented health risks that outweighed the benefits so the studies were halted. The WHI research did not include natural progesterone. Several separate studies that evaluated natural progesterone demonstrated the protective nature progesterone has against breast cancer and other chronic illnesses. Therefore the argument is made and supported that treating women with bio-identical hormones greatly decreases the health risks associated with hormonal imbalance.

**Pregnancy**-Any kind of progestin taken during pregnancy increases the risk of birth defects. However, progesterone is used in infertility treatment to correct the luteal phase deficit that

often leads to infertility and/or miscarriages. Women can safely receive natural progesterone throughout their entire pregnancy. Pro-gest “Pro-gestation”. Progesterone is also safe for treating post-partum depression. Post partum depression stems from a sudden drop in progesterone. Traditional medical practices is to give the mother (often lactating) an anti-depressant which is not safe for the baby and is only a “band-aid” over the real problem. The standard of practice should be to supplement what the body is lacking-**natural progesterone.**