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THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF BREAST HEALTH

How important is it to maintain healthy breasts? Many women are surprised to learn that breast health is critically important to their overall health and wellbeing. Congestion in the breast tissue is a contributing cause to other conditions such as premenstrual syndrome (PMS), uterine fibroids, endometriosis, excessively heavy or irregular menstruation, uterine cancer, difficult menopause, ovarian cysts, acne, hair loss, dysmenorrhea (menstrual cramps) and breast cancer. All of these symptoms can be caused by hormonal imbalances and the breasts are active participants in the overall female hormonal system. Thus, poor breast health affects the whole body and is not just a localized concern.

This is consistent with the “holistic” view of the body that it is all one life-process and that an individual part cannot be affected without affecting the whole. Such a view is contrary to the modern medical practices where specialists treat the body as a conglomerate of isolated parts. In the holistic model, the body is known to have “innate intelligence” and the ability to regulate itself, adapt and survive.

The current trend of women's high degree of susceptibility to breast cancer is not acceptable, especially in light of the homeopathic, herbal, massage and nutritional therapies that have proven to prevent this concern, without the need for risky radiation (mammograms) that damages DNA and causes cancer, and biopsies that cause the proliferation of aberrant cells. Prevention must be a primary focus and can become a simple, necessary, daily ritual like brushing the teeth. For many women, the breasts are a weak link in their health. The weak link must be supported so it does not affect other body systems and contribute to disease.

Weak Link. A fundamental tenet of naturopathic philosophy is to maintain good health by supporting the weak areas or predispositions to illness. The saying, "*a chain is only as strong as its weakest link*" is an appropriate analogy. As we will learn in this material, the breasts are a weak link in many women's health. This means that, like the thyroid gland, the breasts are a canary in the coalmine that provides an early warning to make changes before a more detrimental health concern arises. Thus, the simple breast massage can become a daily ritual that can help prevent and correct many health concerns. When the weak link is strengthened, the body can apply its energies to other healing endeavors.

Therefore, women must become informed about the contributing factors to

breast disease; the dangers of mammograms and the medical trend of 'early detection'¹; and the dangers of synthetic estrogen replacement therapy. And women must become informed about the various practices to build breast health and reverse problems that may already be occurring; as well as methods to maintain integrity in the often-susceptible breast tissue. With these insights and their applications, women will be able to protect and maintain their health at a more vital level.

THE BREASTS AND FEMALE HORMONAL HEALTH

Many women are surprised to learn that the health of the breast tissue affects the entire female endocrine system, and thus the level of health they experience. The endocrine system is made up of the glands that secrete hormones which are substances that activate, regulate, and suppress many body-tissue activities at the cellular level. People who view the breasts as external tissue often ask questions such as, "How can the breasts affect a woman's susceptibility to uterine cancer?" and "What do the breasts have to do with PMS?" So, let's take a brief look at the inter-relatedness of breasts to the female endocrine and reproductive systems.

Inter-relatedness is a well-known and widely accepted principle in the energetic sciences such as homeopathy, systemic herbology, and acupuncture. Only in the 21st Century is modern medical thought finding and proving the validity of this 18th Century concept that one part of the body cannot be affected independently without affecting the whole person. Applications of this principle mean that diet affects health, an acupuncture needle in the leg can affect the liver, massaging the feet can relieve constipation, and a less-than-optimal breast tissue can affect other tissues. Inter relatedness is a fact of life, both bio-energetically and biochemically.

Here's two examples of this holistic concept.

1. Toxins such as pesticides in commercial (non-organic) food, growth hormones in commercial milk, antibiotics in commercial meat, mercury and chemical wastes in fish, are often stored in adipose cells, aka breast cells, where they cause cellular inflammation that raises the level of immune system activity and its collateral damage all over the body.
2. Breast cells have many hormone receptors because the breasts are involved in survival of the species through lactation and the passing forth of the first-line immunological defense system the probiotic cultures needed to regulate both nutritional intake and inflammation for the entire body. If the hormone receptors do not "receive the message," the hormonal messengers stay in the blood too long and can cause uterine or ovarian concerns.

So let's dispel the myth that the breasts are only external tissues and thus areas that are not very important or have little impact on overall health, unless there is a severely pathological state such as cancer metastasis through the lymph. The breasts are not external tissues, a thought that minimizes their importance to body function. Testicles in men are a seemingly external tissue, but it would be a gross understatement to say that testicular tissue is not of a certain importance to men as well as to male body function.

It is well known in obstetrics and midwifery that when the infant nurses at the breast, the milk "lets down" and post-birth uterine hemorrhage stops. This is an example of the pelvic organs responding to stimulus at the "external" breast. The breasts have significant influence over the menstrual cycle, the endometrial tissue, and the ovaries. The breasts have significant receptor sites for the female hormones and thus they are a major part of the female hormonal system.

When the breasts are congested (poor lymphatic movement, impinged blood supply), hormones and their precursors, as well as toxic debris can become stagnant there and cause imbalances in hormonal levels throughout the body. The body can erroneously determine that hormonal levels are too low or too high depending on how it reads the apparent hormonal situation. The body will then try to compensate to maintain what it thinks will be proper hormonal levels, but a decision based on erroneous information can hardly bring hormonal balance. More specifically, unrealistic hormonal information in the bloodstream tells the hypothalamus in the brain to regulate the body on errant information. The hypothalamus controls the pituitary, thyroid, ovaries, adrenals, as well as the liver's involvement in re-conjugation of hormones which is fundamental and necessary detoxification of hormones so they do not over-stimulate certain cells and cause issues such as ovarian cysts, endometrial thickening, and lack of apoptosis (a process where errant cells are destroyed so they do not become cancerous.)

Hormonal levels depend on a complex system of checks and balances between the glands, the nervous system, and the brain. This is called the *neuroendocrine system* and there is much that modern medicine has not discovered about this critically important system. It seems that every year a new endocrine tissue is found so that there are now some 22 endocrine tissues including the heart and skin.

For example, if the body "reads" that there are not enough hormonal activity by-products, it may then interpret that there is not a high enough hormone level to get the desired tissue reactions, and respond with increased hormonal production. For another example, if the body interprets excessive hormones due to poor reception at the cell membranes, it can respond by decreasing hormone excretions thus - causing imbalances that result in low hormonal activity.

For yet another example, if hormonal receptor sites in the breast tissue are

filled with other substances (estrogen mimicking chemicals from plastic water bottles, tin can liners, pesticides), then the normal excretion of a hormone will become excessive because there are fewer receptor sites available for it to complete its mission causing an excessively high hormonal level with accompanying side effects which can include menstrual cramping, mood swings, and hot flashes.

Since hormones activate specific tissue responses while inhibiting other metabolic processes, an actual or relative excess or dearth causes symptoms which are nothing more than the body attempting to maintain correct hormonal equilibrium. So, congestion in the breasts can cause the body to misread its hormone levels and make unnecessary or inaccurate adjustments to regulate itself in optimal health. Such occurrences can result in symptoms such as PMS, dysmenorrhea, endometriosis, fibrocystic disease, depression, ovarian cysts and cancer.

Here we have one answer to why a woman's body may have too much estrogen and grow cysts and tumors. If the cause of the estrogen imbalance is congestion in the breasts based on the toxic environment, we have an easily accessible area for therapeutic adjustment one that the medical profession overlooks because the "ovary doctor" is not concerned with breast health.

The body innately endeavors to maintain hormonal balance. Working with the natural processes, a technique like the breast massage can help the body maintain hormonal balance and prevent or reverse many health concerns.

The complex system of hormonal feedback loops is not yet fully understood by today's science in fact, science has a long, long way to go. A hormone activates certain reactions in certain tissues and often acts in opposition to or cooperation with other endocrine glands. For example, the thyroid hormone *calcitonin* activates the osteoblast cells in the bone to accept calcium, inhibits the activity of the parathyroid gland, and encourages the kidneys to release calcium from the bloodstream. Thus this one hormone affects other endocrine glands, tissues, and organs. Eventually, its activity will cause another hormone to be secreted which will stop its actions so the effects will not become excessive.

More interestingly, many of the body's endocrine checks and balances are not just one hormone opposing another, but instead there may be three or ten hormones that all have input to the overall regulatory process. Beyond that complexity, the enteric nervous system (in the intestines), the central nervous system, control hormones based on circadian rhythms, food intake, herb intake, moon phases, thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of peace VS stress.

The complexity of the endocrine system and the numerous tissue and chemical reactions a hormone activates, and tissues and reactions the "same hormone" same hormone suppresses, should lead us to a clear and obvious position that it is **not wise**

to introduce hormones (synthetic or bio-identical) to the body indiscriminately. Hormones ebb and flow according to body chemistry, to what the body is doing to adapt to its environment, and to inherent circadian rhythms all governed by the body's inherent wisdom.

Rule of thumb: Science has yet to fathom the complete and interrelated role of hormones in the body. Not even close. When the good-intentioned doctor says, "Let's put you on hormone replacement (meaning a synthetic hormone that is just one of hundreds needed by the body) because it will: 1) inhibit the menstrual cycle, 2) keep your vagina from drying out, 3) prevent skin wrinkling, etc., remember that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Medical science has caused thousands of deaths from cancer from giving estrogen replacement therapies and now they say, "now we'll just give you a lower dose."

New evidence today adds to the belief that hormone replacement therapy may do more harm than good for many women after menopause, and it has many experts trying to figure out for which women the therapy is safe.

New results released from the ongoing Women's Health Initiative trial found that not only do postmenopausal women who take a combination of estrogen and progestin therapy have a higher chance of getting **aggressive forms of breast cancer**, but that they may be at higher risk of dying from the disease.

The results, from an 11-year follow up with more than 12,000 women who were randomly assigned to receive either the combination hormone therapy or a placebo, found 385 women taking the therapy developed an aggressive form of breast cancer, compared to 293 in the placebo group. Twenty-five women who took hormone therapy died from breast cancer during the study, compared to 12 women in the placebo group.

"It is early in the follow-up and the number of breast cancer deaths will certainly substantially increase as we move forward," said Dr. Rowan Chlebowski, professor of medicine at the David Geffen School of Medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles, and lead author of the study.

Women in the study who used estrogen and progestin for five-and-a-half years -- which is considered long-term use of the therapy -- were at higher risk of getting breast cancer, said Chlebowski.

Earlier results of this trial indicated a connection between synthetic hormone therapy -- commonly marketed as the drug Prempro -- and less aggressive forms of breast cancer. But results now suggest that women who took hormones may be at risk of any, including more aggressive and late-stage, forms of breast cancer.