



9 Unexpected Signs Of Hormonal Imbalance In Young People

When your hormones are balanced, it means all the body's little chemical messengers are working in harmony to keep your health on track. But once there's too much or not enough of a hormone – either due to too much stress, an underlying health concern, etc. – that's when you might experience signs of a hormonal imbalance.

While it may not seem like a big deal, your hormones really do play a large role in the daily goings on of your body, and shouldn't be ignored. "Most everyone thinks of hormones just as in sex hormones; for example testosterone for men and estrogen and progesterone for women," Dr. Donna Sergi, a Nutrition Response Practitioner and Holistic Chiropractor, tells Bustle. "But hormones control every aspect of body function – from digestion, healing from wounds, bowel movements, sleeping, heartbeat, mood, [and] focus, to name a few."

Many people also think of hormones as they relate to aging, such as when menopause hits and symptoms like hot flashes appear. But these symptoms can occur in younger women, too. Even if you're in your 20s or 30s, you can still experience hormonal imbalances, and feel downright crummy as result. The good news, though, is that hormonal imbalances can be treated, especially if the underlying cause is addressed.

If you notice any of these unexpected signs and symptoms, it may be a good idea to talk with your primary care doctor or OB/GYN. They can figure out which hormones are imbalanced and why, and from there create a game plan to help you feel better.

1. Breast Tenderness



If your estrogen levels are out of whack, it "could present with symptoms of breast tenderness, low libido ... mood swings, and irregular menstrual cycle," says Sergi. While it's expected that you might experience some of these symptoms as your period approaches, due to PMS, these aren't necessarily symptoms you should have throughout the month. So, if your boobs hurt all the time, or you haven't been feeling well but can't explain why, *definitely* tell your doctor to see if hormones are to blame.

2.Hot Flashes



Again, this is a sign of hormonal disruption that's often associated with menopause, which tends to start around age 51. But did you know hot flashes can strike earlier, especially if the hormone progesterone is imbalanced? As Sergi says, "Progesterone imbalance symptoms could be difficulty getting pregnant, mood swings, hot flashes, and fibroids." These issues can crop up when you don't have enough progesterone, which is an issue that can be discussed with your doctor.

3. Extreme Fatigue



While fatigue can be a symptom of pretty much any illness – as well as a sign you're simply not getting enough sleep – it can also point to a hormone imbalance, especially if it's extreme and ongoing.

One culprit may be your adrenal glands, which pump out the hormone cortisol, especially when you're super stressed. And this can eventually lead to a condition some doctors refer to as adrenal fatigue.

"With fatigue our adrenal glands – the glands that produce hormones – are firing off excess amount of cortisol and other stress hormones into the bloodstream," Maggie Michalczyk, a Chicago-based registered dietician, tells Bustle. "They inevitably exhaust themselves in the process, and this cycle causes extreme fatigue, sluggishness, and

brain fog." So if you have reason to believe exhaustion may be hormonal, talk to your doctor to get to the root of the issue.

4. Foggy Thinking & Trouble Concentrating



Speaking of brain fog, it's yet another symptom you shouldn't brush off, or think of as something that only affects older adults. If you can't seem to get your thoughts straight, it may be due to low levels of estrogen, which "can lead to difficulty concentrating and remembering," Rebecca Lee, a Registered Nurse and founder of the natural health resource RemediesForMe, tells Bustle. "Abnormal cortisol levels, the hormone that helps fight the effects of stress, may play a part in this issue as well." As with any other health concern, your doctor can help you address this imbalance that may be causing brain fog.

5.Recurring Infections



Believe it or not, if you can't seem to shake an infection, it may be worth it to have your hormone levels checked. "Estrogen levels that vary from too high to too low can make women more likely to get infections," Lee says. "High levels of estrogen may lead to multiple yeast infections, while low levels of estrogen may bring on urinary tract infections." And since neither of those issues are very comfortable, it's in your best interest to do all that you can to prevent them.

6. Irregular Periods



If your periods aren't predictable, you shouldn't ignore or accept it — even if it's been happening to you for years. "One of the first things I see that indicates a hormonal imbalance in many of my clients is an irregular cycle," maternal health specialist Elizabeth Shaw MS, RDN, CLT, CPT tells Bustle. "Whether that means a cycle that lasts 40 plus days or a cycle that appears so irregularly [you] cannot even identify [your] last flow, both are areas of concern."

For this issue, there are a few hormones that may be to blame. "While there are many reasons that one's cycle could be irregular, often times I find there is an imbalance of estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone within one's body, coupled with an influx of cortisol," Shaw says. If this is the case for you, your OB/GYN can help you find the best method to keep your cycle regular.

7. Vaginal Dryness



While everyone should consider using lube during sex to make sure they're comfortable, feeling like you *have* to use it due to vaginal dryness should tip you off to the possibility of a hormonal imbalance.

"Vaginal dryness is typically brought on by low levels of estrogen," Lee says. And since this can lead to painful intercourse, be sure to speak with your OB/GYN as soon as possible, to figure out what's wrong.

8.Excessive Sweatiness



If you have an overactive thyroid gland, or hyperthyroidism, it can reveal itself with several odd symptoms, such as excessive sweating, due to the overproduction of the hormone thyroxine.

When that's the case, you may experience symptoms like "fast heartbeat ... sweating, [and] difficulty sleeping," Dr. Nieca Goldberg, Medical Director of the Joan H. Tisch Center for Women's Health at NYU Langone Medical Center, tells Bustle.

Other symptoms of hyperthyroidism include sensitivity to heat, trembling hands, fatigue, brittle hair, thinning skin, and changes in your bowel patterns. Treatment for this usually includes anti-thyroid medications, according to the Mayo Clinic, which is an option you can discuss with your doctor.

9. Temperature Sensitivity



When it comes to an underactive thyroid, or hypothyroidism, symptoms can be quite off, too. And yes, this issue can affect women in their 20s and 30s, though the age of onset is usually around 60 for women, according to WebMD.

As Dr. Goldberg says, symptoms include feeling very cold, very tired, and experiencing heavy menstrual periods. If you have hypothyroidism, your doctor might prescribe a synthetic (or man-made) thyroid hormone T4, according to WebMD, to help even out your symptoms.

If you feel bad or are experiencing unexpected symptoms like these, it may not hurt to look into a hormonal imbalance as a possible cause. Whether you have too much estrogen, an overactive thyroid, or too little progesterone, your hormones *can* be evened out, with the right treatment, and you can get back to feeling like yourself again.