

Chapter 5

The Hormone-Hottie Foods

The following list gives you a snapshot of nutritious foods and drinks that help you achieve hormonal balance, feel satisfied, fight disease and lose fat. To fully take advantage of all the benefits each food has to offer, follow my suggested serving guidelines. In general though, you should enjoy all of these hormone-enhancing foods as often as you can.

Beautiful Broccoli

Broccoli and other cruciferous vegetables (cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, kale, and cabbage) contain high amounts of phytonutrients called isothiocyanates, particularly two isothiocyanates called sulforaphane and indole-3-carbinol. These phytonutrients work wonders to increase the capacity of our liver to detoxify harmful, cancer-causing compounds. Sulforaphane increases the activity of the liver's phase two detoxification enzymes. These enzymes are well known for their ability to clear a wide variety of toxic compounds from the body, including many nasty carcinogens and cell-damaging free radicals. Indole-3-carbinol helps breakdown a harmful and potent estrogen metabolite (2-hydroxyestrone) that promotes tumor growth, especially in estrogen-sensitive breast cells. Researchers at the University of California at Berkeley have shown that indole-3-carbinol halts the growth of breast cancer cells and may also offer protection against the spread of cancer, an attribute that may make it a good cancer therapy option when combined with other drugs. Just 2½ cups of broccoli a week is all you need to reduce your risk of several cancers, particularly breast and prostate. Broccoli also offers a healthy hit of fiber, minerals and vitamins.

Fabulous Flaxseeds

Flax is full of lignans -- phytoestrogenic compounds that have been proven to help protect us against certain kinds of cancers, especially breast, prostate and colon. Adding two to three tablespoons of flaxseeds to your smoothies, oatmeal, salads or cereals daily can reduce your cancer risk and also provide a dose of fiber and essential fatty acids. The oils in flaxseeds can go rancid quickly, so be sure to purchase ground flaxseed in a vacuum-sealed package and store them in the freezer. Better yet, you can grind your own daily.

Glorious Green Tea: 4 Cups a Day

Drink four cups daily and you can enjoy weight loss, possibly even without a change in diet and exercise. A 1999 study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* reported that green tea extract can significantly increase metabolism and fat burning. Questioning whether some of these effects were due to the caffeine content of green

tea, the researchers delved deeper and discovered that other properties besides caffeine were behind the fat-burning benefits. While the caffeine does provide an energizing boost, the tea also offers calming effects because it contains theanine, a natural compound that blocks the release of cortisol – great for conquering ab fat!

Green tea also contains group of antioxidants called polyphenols useful for cancer protection, free radical protection and cutting inflammation - so drink plenty of it - regularly. It can help lower cholesterol and improve your blood sugar balance too.

Revel in Red Wine: 4 Glasses a Week for Women; 7 Glasses a Week for Men

The French have had it right for centuries. Consumed in moderation, red wine can reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes, prostate cancer and heart disease. The antioxidant polyphenols found in the skin and seeds of grapes -- especially catechins and resveratrol -- aid heart health, inhibit inflammation and help prevent the development of certain cancers. Resveratrol, a natural antifungal and antibacterial compound within grapes, may benefit nerves cells and assist in the prevention of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease.

According to researchers from Northwestern University Medical School, many benefits of resveratrol are in fact due to its estrogenic properties. When consumed with or after a meal, red wine is a good digestive aid. Despite all the wonderful benefits of red wine, note that you should stay away from this Hormone Hottie beverage if you have a medical condition worsened by alcohol, such as alcoholism, elevated triglycerides, pancreatitis, liver disease, uncontrolled hypertension, depression or congestive heart failure.

Get Your Daily Dose of Extra Virgin Olive Oil

Olive oil has been a vital component in a heart-healthy, Mediterranean-style diet for a very long time. The fresh news is the many additional benefits of olive oil that support its designation as a Hormone Hottie Food.

Olives and olive oil are rich in antioxidant compounds called polyphenols, which are known to have anti-inflammatory, anti-cancer and anti-coagulant benefits. Olive oil also provides a rich source of plant sterols to curb inflammation aid, hormonal balance and control cholesterol. Though the various ways olive oil benefits weight loss is possibly the most exciting info I have to share. And these effects are not only because of its ability to reduce inflammation.

When we include them in our daily diet, monounsaturated fats such as olive oil encourage the release of our appetite-suppressing hormone leptin. Olive oil, in particular, has been shown to improve our sensitivity to insulin. In a study published in the July 2007 issue of *Diabetes Care*, 11 subjects with insulin resistance and increased abdominal fat used three different diets for 28 days. Each diet had equal calories but

different compositions – one was a high-saturated-fat diet, the second was high in carbohydrates and the third was rich in monounsaturated fats. At the end of the 28-day period, researchers measured the effects of each diet on body-fat distribution, insulin resistance and adiponectin levels. You may recall I first spoke about adiponectin in Chapter 3. It is a hormone released by our fat cells and known to improve insulin sensitivity, reduce inflammation and offer us protection against obesity and metabolic syndrome.

Can you guess the results? Of the three diets, the diet rich in olive oil showed the best outcome, preventing not only belly fat accumulation but also the insulin resistance and drop in adiponectin typically seen in people who eat a high-carbohydrate diet.

Another study in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* (October 2007) found comparable results when using a similar study design. Again, weight maintenance was best with the olive-oil-rich diet, especially when this fat was consumed at breakfast. Improved fasting insulin, blood sugar balance (after meals), good HDL cholesterol and other signs of insulin balance were noted in the 12 insulin-resistant subjects who took part in the study.

But here's the really amazing tidbit. Besides helping us lose weight, balance our hormones, reduce inflammation and keep insulin under control, olive oil also breaks down fat cells we already have. In a study published in the *British Journal of Nutrition* (December 2003) researchers fed three different diets to rats – one rich in olive oil, another high in polyunsaturated soybean oil and a third high in saturated fat from palm kernel oil. The results showed increased breakdown of fats in fat cell with the olive oil rich diet. Interestingly, the opposite effect was noted with the diet high in soybean oil, which is listed in Chapter 15 as one of the Hormone-Hindering food we should avoid 100% of the time. Based on these results, staying away from soy bean oil is *definitely* a good thing.

Enjoy Avocado

Avocados contain glutathione, one of the most potent antioxidants and disease-fighting agents available to us. These rich-tasting fruits are also high in heart-friendly vitamin E and potassium. Back in 1996, avocados gained publicity as a healthy food when a study looking at the health benefits of daily avocado consumption was published in the *Archives of Medical Research*. During the study, 45 people ate avocados every day for a week. They experienced an average 17% drop in total blood cholesterol and their cholesterol ratio also changed in a healthy way: LDL went down and HDL went up. Researchers now know that avocados are rich in beta-sitosterol, a natural substance shown to significantly lower blood cholesterol levels. In a review article published in the December 1999 issue of the *American Journal of Medicine*, researchers pointed out that beta-sitosterol was shown to reduce cholesterol in 16 human studies. Another wonderful benefit of beta-sitosterol is that it helps to balance cortisol, even during

exercise. It may also help to restore low DHEA and decrease the inflammation typically associated with the stress of intense exercise.

Unfortunately avocados earned an undeserved bad rap during the low-fat craze because they are high in monounsaturated fats. But remember, you *need* fats – healthy fats – for fat loss. Besides offering an excellent source of healthy fat, avocados are also rich in antioxidants that are great for your complexion.

An Organic Apple a Day

With all that fiber and antioxidant power, an apple a day truly can help keep the doctor away. Apples contain quercetin, a flavonoid antioxidant and natural antihistamine. Like many other flavonoids, quercetin also has phytoestrogenic properties. Finnish researchers finally completed a study in September 2002 in which 10,054 people ate an apple a day beginning in 1966! Published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, the results showed that this simple dietary habit reduced the risk of almost every chronic disease associated with aging, including osteoporosis, heart disease, cancer, stroke, type 2 diabetes and asthma. Numerous other studies support the cancer-protective benefits of quercetin for the prostate, lung, breast and skin. For all these reasons and more, an apple a day is part of *The Hormone Diet* nutrition plan.

Super Sexy Salba

Salba® is a gluten-free ancient grain that can be added to just about any food. It has been studied extensively by Dr. Vladimir Vuksan, an associate professor of endocrinology and nutritional Sciences at the University of Toronto Faculty of Medicine. It is world's first and only medically patented food and its nutritional profile is quite something, I must say! On a per gram basis, Salba is touted to be:

- The highest source of omega-3's in nature – with 65% of its total fat is from omega-3 fatty acids
- The highest source of fiber in nature – 35% (90% of which is insoluble and 10% is soluble)
- Abundant in the minerals magnesium, potassium, folic acid, iron and calcium
- A complete source of all essential amino acids and bio-available protein
- A great choice for a carbohydrate-conscious eater. The carbs in Salba® are mostly insoluble fiber, which means it has few calories and is very beneficial for digestion

Just 3 ½ oz. (100 grams) of Salba offers an amazing 20 grams of omega-3s, the equivalent of 1 ¾ lbs. (790 grams) of Atlantic salmon. Wow! (Source: www.sourcesalba.com)

And then there are the hormonal benefits. Salba stabilizes blood sugars, manages the effects of diabetes, improves insulin sensitivity and aids symptoms related to metabolic syndrome, including imbalances in cholesterol, blood pressure and high blood sugar

after meals. Salba is highly anti-inflammatory and reduces high sensitivity C-reactive protein, a blood marker of inflammation. This wondrous little grain also contains high amounts of tryptophan, the amino acid precursor of serotonin and melatonin. Sure sounds like we should all be savouring Salba every day, although it actually has very little taste – yet another fantastic feature that makes it so easy to blend with other foods.

Go Nuts: 10 – 20 Almonds or 1 Tbsp. of Almond Butter Daily

Raw nuts such as almonds and walnuts are an excellent choice for healthful, filling snacks. Nuts are not only rich in healthy oils, zinc, selenium and vitamin E but they also provide a mix of protein and carbohydrate all in one, making them a good option for the carbohydrate-conscious eater looking to lose weight. (But remember, just a small handful will do.) The healthy fats in nuts also stimulate leptin release, which helps control your appetite. Snacking on nuts or adding them to salads or oatmeal five times a week is proven to reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes and to lower cholesterol too.

Like avocados, most nuts are an excellent source of the plant sterol beta-sitosterol. Almonds, in particular, contain protein, fiber, plant sterols and several other heart-healthy nutrients. Almonds are also known to slow the absorption of carbohydrates in the body, which may help with diabetes management. In addition to lowering cholesterol levels and reducing the risk of coronary heart disease, researchers at the University of Toronto found that eating almonds may reduce the impact of carbohydrate-rich foods on blood sugars. Their data highlights that eating almonds together with carbs slows the rise in blood sugar, which may increase satiety and help keep insulin levels from fluctuating. So if you absolutely have to grab some cheesecake, I guess you should have a few almonds with it!

Here's a surprising fact about walnuts. Research from the University of Texas Health Science Center published in the September 2005 issue of *Nutrition*, showed that walnuts are a source of melatonin. You will recall that melatonin improves our sleep but it also offers antioxidant protection. So walnuts just might be your secret weapon against sleeplessness nights, as well as cancer, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease and cardiovascular illness.

And let's not forget about pecans, the sole nut cited by the US Department of Agriculture in their list of "Top 20 Fruits, Vegetables and Nuts" for sources of food antioxidants. Loma Linda University also published research results in 2006 showing that adding just a handful of pecans to a balanced diet could help manage our bad LDL cholesterol. Good news for nut lovers, because pecans sure are tasty.

Soy: a Serving Once a Day

Bone density, hormonal balance and cholesterol levels change as we age, but a daily serving of soy can help lower cholesterol, keep bones strong, improve heart health, protect the prostate and ease the symptoms of menopause. The therapeutic effects of soy products come from the phytoestrogens naturally present in soybeans. Just a cup of unsweetened, organic soy milk or yogurt, a handful of soy nuts or a palm-sized serving of tempeh can do the trick. Research from the University of Illinois also suggests soy protein may help to increase metabolism, manage weight and limit the growth of fat cells.

Refreshing Reverse Osmosis Water

Our skin certainly needs healthy fats to stay supple, but water is the key to preventing fine lines and a dehydrated appearance. Believe it or not, our skin, like most tissues in our body, is mostly water. Sufficient water is crucial for preventing joint stiffness, weight gain, headaches, decreased athletic performance and poor recovery after exercise. In general, the eight cups-a-day guideline is sufficient, but you should definitely drink more when you exercise or spend time in the sun. Dehydration also increases the release of NPY, which stimulates our appetite. So next time you feel hungry, drink a glass of water first to be sure your body isn't tricking you into consuming extra calories. If you purchase water, look for reverse osmosis or pure spring water in glass bottles rather than plastic. Also, be aware that distilled water is void of essential minerals.

Powerful Whey Protein Isolate

This powdered supplement is the most bio-available source of protein we can get, making it a great addition to smoothies and shakes. Your liver loves whey protein because it offers us a concentrated source of glutathione, just like lovely avocados. Whey has been proven to promote fat loss, preserve muscle tissue, enhance immunity, aid insulin sensitivity and support recovery after exercise. It is also a source of tryptophan, which can help raise serotonin and combat stress.

Bountiful Berries

Berries have gained plenty of good publicity as a super food choice for protection against free radicals and inflammation, both of which accelerate aging and contribute to diseases such as cancer and Alzheimer's. Blueberries, in particular, can protect us against sun damage and support eye health. They are high in fiber, low in sugar and contain a potent dose of proanthocyanidins, which are beneficial for skin, cognitive function and cardiovascular health.

Most of us are familiar with blueberries and other berries typically found in our local supermarket. But have you ever heard of the acai berry? Researchers at the University of Florida have recently shown these tropical berries to be even higher in antioxidants than blueberries. How about goji berries? They're also one of my new favorite snacks.

Very high in fiber and antioxidants, they also contain an amazing four grams of protein per serving and a bit of iron too! A tablespoon or two of goji berries mixed with low fat, organic cottage cheese is a fantastic option for a snack.

Sprinkle on the Cinnamon

I encourage you to add cinnamon to your food and hot drinks as often as possible not only because it tastes so nice but also because it offers wonderful insulin-balancing effects. A study published in the journal *Diabetes Care* (December 2003) showed that cinnamon may cause muscle and liver cells to respond more readily to insulin. Better response to insulin means better blood sugar balance and, therefore, less insulin in your body. Cinnamon also seems to reduce several risk factors for cardiovascular disease, including high blood sugar, triglycerides, LDL cholesterol and total cholesterol. Just a ½ teaspoon a day for 30 days is enough to significantly improve your insulin response *and* trim your waistline. I add it to my coffee, and you should too.

Beneficial Oat Bran

Oats are a good source of many nutrients including vitamin E, zinc, selenium, copper, iron, manganese and magnesium. They are also packed with protein and fiber, which can help balance blood sugar and insulin while reducing cholesterol and heart-disease risk. According to the American Cancer Society, the phytochemicals in oats may also have cancer-fighting properties. They make a nice, comfy hot breakfast and can easily be added to many recipes.

Be Big On Buckwheat

Buckwheat offers us an alternative to wheat, one of the most highly allergenic foods and the grain we tend to most commonly overeat. Buckwheat is a gluten-free grain, making it an excellent choice for those with celiac disease, gluten sensitivities, food allergies or for anyone undertaking an anti-inflammatory detox. It can be used as an alternative to rice or served as porridge.

Buckwheat is higher in protein and fiber than other grains. Recall the benefits of protein; it assists with healthy immunity, healing after exercise, maintaining stable blood sugar balance and encouraging fat loss. Buckwheat is also lower on the glycemic index and results in less insulin release after consumption. It's known to lower cholesterol and is a rich source of magnesium. Rich in anti-inflammatory flavonoids (especially *rutin*, which tonifies veins and is useful for treating and preventing spider or varicose veins), buckwheat is a beautiful choice for bolstering the health of our heart and blood vessels.

Say Yes to Plain Organic Yogurt

As a natural source of probiotics (there's more to come about these critters in Chapter 10), yogurt promotes good digestion, restores healthy bacterial balance in the gut, aids the metabolism of estrogen and supports healthy immunity. Studies have shown that just half a cup a day can lessen the frequency and severity of colds and flus.

Besides reducing the uncomfortable abdominal bloating often associated with unsettled digestion, yogurt may also help trim your waistline by encouraging weight loss. Recent reports showing the benefits of high-calcium, low-fat dairy products for weight loss is certainly welcome news for dieters and dairy farmers alike. Plus, you may recall the benefits of high water-content foods I mentioned in the previous chapter. Yogurt is a great example of a helpful, volumizing food that sends the strong message to your brain that you're full. If you are lactose intolerant or have other sensitivities to dairy, however, you should leave this one out of your diet.

Pour on the Pomegranate

Researchers at the University of Wisconsin have shown that pomegranate extract has anti-cancer, anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties that are effective in suppressing cancer of the skin, breast and colon. New research indicates that pomegranate may be particularly helpful for the prevention of breast cancer. The most powerful estrogen in the body, estradiol, plays an important role in the origin and development of breast cancers, most of which are hormone-dependent in their early stages. Pomegranates possess natural compounds that inhibit the enzyme in women's bodies that converts the weak estrogen, estrone, into its most potent metabolite, estradiol. High amounts of this enzyme can be an indicator of adverse prognosis in women with estrogen-receptor-positive breast tumors. As a result, pomegranate offers some hope for possible therapeutic interventions in breast cancer. Guys, it's also showing promise for prostate cancer protection for you too. Pomegranate juices or seeds are a great way to enjoy the healthful benefits of this tasty ruby-red fruit.

Spice up Your Life

Herbs and spices certainly add zesty flavor to our meals, but many also offer anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, anti-aging, immune-enhancing, and hormone-balancing effects. Garlic, rosemary, thyme, turmeric, cumin, curry and cayenne pepper are particularly beneficial.

Turmeric (also called curcumin) is one of my personal favorites because it naturally cuts inflammation, pain and swelling. According to trials conducted at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in 2006, a combination of turmeric and quercetin, a powerful antioxidant found in onions, apples, and cabbage, can help shrink painful colon polyps. Those who participated in this study experienced a 60% drop in the number of polyps along with 50% shrinkage of polyps that remained. In a 2006 study published in

the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*, researchers at UCLA also found that turmeric helps clear the brain of the plaques that are characteristic of the disease. Incredible!

Ginger is another fabulous herb proven to prevent and treat nausea from motion sickness, pregnancy and chemotherapy. It's a potent antioxidant that works by blocking the potentially nauseating effects of serotonin on the gut. Like turmeric, ginger also possesses natural anti-inflammatory benefits and may improve blood flow. A study conducted at the University of Miami showed ginger extract also had a significant effect on reducing the pain of osteoarthritis. Similarly encouraging results were found in a 2006 study at the University of Michigan Comprehensive Cancer Center. These researchers found powdered ginger killed ovarian cancer cells just as well or *better* than traditional chemotherapy.

Delicious Dark Chocolate: a One-inch Square Daily

A research team from the University of Helsinki, Finland, asked pregnant women to rate their stress levels and document their chocolate consumption. Guess what they found? Six months after birth, the mothers rated their infants' behavior in various categories including fear, soothability, smiling and laughter. The babies born to women who had eaten chocolate daily during pregnancy smiled and laughed more and were more active. Even the babies of stressed women who had regularly consumed chocolate during pregnancy showed less fear of new situations than babies of stressed moms-to-be who abstained. Awesome news for new moms *and* chocoholics!

Who says we can't indulge a little and improve our health at the same time? This tasty treat boosts our endorphins and also contains tryptophan (a building block of serotonin) and the brain chemical phenylethylamine known to promote our feelings of attraction, excitement and love. But new research shows yet another chemical is involved in the happy little high we get from chocolate. Dr. Daniele Piomelli, a neuroscientist and professor of pharmacology at the University of California, Irvine, suggests that chocolate influences anandamide, a chemical that targets our brain much the way the active ingredient (THC), in marijuana does. Chocolate contains anandamide, as well as two chemicals known to slow the breakdown of this neurochemical. So, it might work by prolonging the action of this natural stimulant in our brain.

Chocolate is also good for our heart and blood vessels. According to a study published in the July 2007 edition of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, eating a small portion of dark chocolate each day can lower blood pressure without packing on extra pounds. Dark chocolate's heart-healthy effects are thought to come from flavonoids, natural compounds in cocoa beans that give dark chocolate its bittersweet taste. Dark chocolate is richest in flavonoids, whereas white chocolate contains none. Flavonoids

have been shown to inhibit blood clot formation, ease constriction of blood vessels and slow the oxidation of LDL cholesterol.

Food for Your Thoughts

Blueberries, tea, grapes and cocoa enhance memory in mice, according to research published in *The Journal of Neuroscience* (May 2007). The effects of these foods were intensified when the mice also exercised regularly. The compound common to all these foods is epicatechin, a flavonol that has already been shown to improve cardiovascular function and increase blood flow in the brain. Flavonoids are also found in some chocolate, so maybe we should snack on a square before our workouts for an extra brain boost!

Which Red Wine Should You Chose?

Researchers at the University of California, Davis, tested a variety of wines to determine which types have the highest concentrations of flavonoids. They found dryer wines such as cabernet sauvignon to be the flavonoid favorites, followed closely by petit syrah and pinot noir. Merlots and red zinfandels were found to have fewer flavonoids than the others.