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## **In Balance Newsletter Fall 2008**

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### **STEP INTO BALANCE THIS FALL**

In this Issue – news, research and information in your journey to wellness:

- \* A Bubble Bath at 33,000 Feet
- \* Bioidentical Hormone Research News
- \* Honoring Your Sexual Health
- \* Download Newsletter (pdf)

### **A BUBBLE BATH AT 33,000 FEET**

A while ago, (I can't remember exactly when, but that's the Big M for you.), I wrote that menopausal women should not fly. In airplanes. Jet lag can make an already cranky goddess downright vicious.

Yet, now that the worst of the hot flashes, mood swings, and brain fog are in my rear view mirror, I can truly say that I love air travel, particularly long flights. Okay, I hate the packing and the obsessing and the security lines and the endless crap leading up to the flight. But once I'm in my seat and have snapped the buckle of my seatbelt into place, I am a happy woman.

No one can reach me. No phone, no email, no faxes, no doorbell. Plane flights are a modern day version of the old ads from the seventies where a woman indulges in a bubble bath to escape the cares of the day. "Calgon, take me away....." While there are no bubbles, there are "attendants" who shut the world out when they close the door handle and bring you cool drinks. And not a few of them are menopausal goddesses themselves.

I climbed on such a flight a few days and nine time zones ago. My initial flight was diverted due to bad weather and we sat on the tarmac in San Antonio, Texas. Needless to say, we had those little air vents cranked to maximum. Then the weather cleared and we took off for Dallas, our original destination. In minutes, the cabin was FRIGID. (Aka just right.)

People were starting to complain when the honeyed tones of a southern flight attendant explained that the A/C was working now that we were in the air and if cold, all we needed to do was close down our little vents. "And if you're menopausal, honey, just open it up all the way and enjoy."

I love menopausal women. And flight attendants. And I love that we are not afraid to talk about the Big M anymore. American Airlines, take me away.....

Lynette Sheppard, RN writes and moderates the Menopause Goddess Blog – [www.menopausegoddessblog.org](http://www.menopausegoddessblog.org) – where women share their wisdom for the pivotal journeys through menopause, midlife, and the Second Half of our lives. Lynette's new book "The Big M" is available now. ([www.thebigmwebsite.com](http://www.thebigmwebsite.com))

### **BIOIDENTICAL HORMONE RESEARCH NEWS**

Drs. Kenna Stephenson, Anna Kurdowska, and Pierre Neuenschwander recently published a manuscript titled: Transdermal Progesterone: Effects on menopausal symptoms and on thrombotic, anticoagulant, and inflammatory factors in postmenopausal women in the July/August 2008 issue of The International Journal of Pharmaceutical Compounding.

This research study meets the "gold standard" for scientific investigations because the women were given a placebo (inactive product) or active hormone; both the researchers and the patients did not know whether or not patients received placebo or hormone; and the women were switched to placebo or hormone during the study duration. All of these procedures ensured that the measured changes were related to progesterone and not other factors. Results of the study showed that progesterone cream in a dose of 20 mg delivered through the skin once daily, significantly improved menopausal symptoms.

No significant changes occurred in measures of clotting factors and inflammatory factors which are strongly associated with cardiovascular disease risk for heart attack and stroke. These findings suggest that progesterone delivered through the skin is a safe and effective alternative to conventional prescribed hormone therapy such as that used in the Women's Health Initiative. Dr. Stephenson's findings further support the

role of progesterone as a cardio protective hormone for menopausal women.

The research team led by Dr. Stephenson is also investigating the effects of other bioidentical hormones including estriol, estradiol, DHEA, and testosterone used in combination with progesterone for perimenopausal and postmenopausal women.

In this protocol, during the first eight weeks women were given either progesterone alone, or progesterone plus estradiol/estriol combination. After this interval, women who were low in androgens (testosterone) had androgens added to their hormone compound. The Hormone Restoration Model of Care recognizes that women have unique needs and hormonal changes, and each woman must be assessed and treated individually. As investigators we are measuring outcomes in the entire group; however, each patient is on a personalized regimen indicated by her unique needs.

After one year of individualized hormone regimens, no harmful effects were measured on inflammatory and clotting factors. Significant beneficial effects were noted including lowering of systolic blood pressure, fasting blood glucose, and fasting triglycerides. Subjects also had significant improvement in bodily pain, anxiety, and depression. These findings were reported in *Circulation and Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis, and Vascular Biology*, both journals of the American Heart Association.

### **HONORING YOUR SEXUAL HEALTH**

Anna Freud once said “Sex is something you do, sexuality is something you are.” Even without the benefit of dinner-time discussions with Sigmund Freud, his daughter’s astute insight can guide us as we start to develop an understanding of sexual health.

Sexual health is not just the absence of problems, nor is it a sum of behaviors – rather, it is built on your relationship to your own unique sexuality. Understanding yourself as a sexual being allows you to make choices about sexual acts that reflect who you are. By asking yourself the questions in this article, you can begin to form an identity about your sexuality that will help you make decisions about the kind of intimate life you want to create.

It is also worth noting that the healing effects of intimacy and connection extend far beyond the physical act of lovemaking. Hundreds of major medical studies have shown that an active sex life leads to a longer life, better heart health, a healthier immune response, reduction in chronic pain symptoms, lower rates of depression and even protection against

some cancers. Men who have regular sex (only twice per week) have half as many heart attacks as men who only have sex once per month. In fact, a regular garden variety sex life has been shown to extend life by as much as ten years. People who enjoy a meaningful sex life are less anxious, fearful and inhibited.

Consider these questions.....

Does my sexuality enhance my self esteem and self respect?

This should be the first consideration in developing an active and healthy sex life. Physical intimacy is the most vulnerable experience we share with another. Healthy sex lets you get out of bed feeling loved, accepted and valued. Although the acts we perform in our sex lives may leave us mystified, if they leave you feeling cheap or dirty, then something is amiss.

Are my sexual behaviors voluntary? Do I feel like sex is forced upon me or that I participate because I feel that I will be abandoned if I don't agree?

Good sex always includes the willing participation of two people. Sexual desire is the result of a complex range of internal experiences that includes everything from hormonal stimulation to a prehistoric form of communication. Our ability to feel sexual is influenced by the culture and family we live in. In a couple, it is deeply affected by the communication that forms the basis of the relationship.

The issue of initiation in sexuality is a sticky one for many couples. Often times these complex issues boil down to arguments about who initiates and what response the initiator receives. The classic, "I am not in the mood" or "I am tired" responses create a cycle of defensive and offensive reactions that is almost like a pre-patterned dance. It's a scenario that many couples just don't have enough language to find their way out of. Creating a sex life that nourishes the relationship and both partners' needs cannot be based on some romantic notions of a "mood" but rather must take into account and respect the different needs that each partner brings and a working compromise that inspires both people to want to find each other.

Are my sexual behaviors enjoyable and pleasurable? Does giving and receiving pleasure feel equally satisfying?

Sexual pleasure and orgasm are mysteries of epic proportions. So mysterious is this part of being human that early religions referred to this experience as the forbidden fruit.

Cultural and religious taboos about these experiences have relegated much of the communication about this experience to the adult

entertainment industry which is a shame, because sharing the experience of sexual pleasure with someone you love and trust is one of the most transformative acts that can build intimacy and togetherness.

Abandoning some level of your everyday reasoning self and allowing yourself the pure experience of sensation are prerequisite to beginning to learn what kinds of touch feel most sensuous. Einstein once said that “imagination is more important than knowledge” which is certainly true when it comes to the experience of satisfying and sensuous intimate experience.

Do my sexual behaviors take my overall health and well being into consideration? Am I protected against STD's and unwanted pregnancy? Sexuality is an act that can create serious unintended consequences. It is essential to have conversations about your partner's sexual history and also about the goals of a sexual experience. To engage in a sexual act with someone without this type of conversation could potentially open you up to a variety of diseases that would impact your life forever, and dealing with an unwanted pregnancy is one of the most jarring and emotionally difficult circumstances that you might ever face. A sexually healthy life is always built on honesty and concern for health consequences.

Am I able to respond to and be in touch with my sexuality in a healthy way despite sexual dysfunction issues that I may be dealing with? If you're in pain, it's hard to enjoy sex – yet over a third of all women suffer from some kind of sexual dysfunction issues at some point in their lives. Distinguishing between your sexuality and your sexual dysfunction is key to maintaining an intimate life regardless of the symptoms that may currently be derailing your sex life. There are multiple solutions – ranging from the very simple to solutions your doctor can provide.

Sometimes the transitions of aging can truly alter your lovemaking – in arousal and overall response. If you are experiencing significant changes from what was normal for you in the past, you owe it to yourself to seek medical attention as there are many individualized options that can help.

One of the most common and easy to address issues is lack of lubrication in intimacy, which can take on multiple forms and occur for multiple reasons. Age, childbearing and nursing and some medications often cause vaginal dryness and its associated pain with sex. Often this physiological issue is accompanied by a lack of sexual drive because our natural lubrication also acts as a sign that we are aroused. A good lubricant can help you realize that the body can teach the mind, and

arousal and sexual enhancement may be as close as the lubricant bottle on your night stand! On the other end of the spectrum are treatments your physician can provide. In the last few years doctors have developed many new tools – including non-invasive ones.

Identifying with your sexuality instead of your dysfunction is the first critical step in reclaiming a healthy and satisfying sex life.

Wendy Strgar is an entrepreneur with a mission: to encourage sustainable loving relationships with both education and healthy love products. She is the founder and owner of Good Clean Love Inc., a privately held; woman owned and operated company that provides all natural sexual well-being products and educational tools for health conscious women and couples.

For more information go to: [www.goodcleanlove.com](http://www.goodcleanlove.com)