

ESTROGEN EXCESS

Estrogen is a potent steroid hormone (specifically a group of hormones) that is responsible for keeping you joyful, juicy, and feeling sexy. However, high estrogen levels can result in stubborn weight gain, particularly in the hips and buttocks, mood swings, PMS, depression or irritability, weepiness, sometime over the most ridiculous things and mini breakdowns or anxiety. Women with estrogen dominance can develop fibroids and endometriosis. Elevated estrogen levels have also been connected to be the leading cause of breast cancer in women.

Yes, you can be estrogen dominant (high estrogen, or specifically estradiol) and also have low estrogen. This can happen when you have too little protective forms of estrogens (especially the estriol) as opposed to estradiol and/or when your progesterone levels are too low to oppose estradiol.

Causes of estrogen excess

- **Perimenopause.** Due to the fluctuation of estrogen levels, overall the estrogen levels are higher relative to progesterone levels. Finally, estrogen levels will fall with menopause
- **Xenoestrogens.** These are synthetic chemicals that mimic estrogen and are referred to as “endocrine disrupters”. They come from artificial chemicals you are exposed to in your daily life such as plastics. Examples are BPA and phthalates.
- **Obesity and weight gain.** In addition to the ovaries, fat cells also produce estrogens, specifically estrone. Women with excess fat cells have increased risk of not only diabetes, heart disease and sleep apnea but also breast, uterine and colon cancers!
- **Diet.** Diets high in grain-fed meat and dairy as well as refined carbohydrates will likely cause estrogen overload. Consumption of alcohol also raises estrogen levels and slows down fat burning.
- **Nutritional deficiencies.** Low levels of magnesium have been associated with higher estrogen levels in both perimenopausal and menopausal women as well as low levels of vitamin B₁₂, folate and zinc.
- **Mercury.** Acts like a Xenoestrogen by binding to estrogen receptors. Mercury can be found in certain fish which should be avoided (particularly shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tile fish) as well high-fructose corn syrup, fungicides and herbicides, dental fillings, thermometers.

Targeted lifestyle changes

1. **Avoid caffeine.** Coffee and other caffeinated beverages decrease E2 levels. Herbal teas containing rhubarb or valerian (as a tea or supplement) may help reduce hot flashes and improve sleep.
2. **Avoid xenoestrogens.** Minimize exposure to environmental toxins. Avoid canned food, plastic food containers and fish high in mercury. Take your shoes off when you are inside your house. Buy organic when you can. Check ewg.org for the “Clean 15” and “Dirty Dozen”.
3. **Eat grass-fed meat and dairy.** Although more expensive, when animals are treated humanely, eat the foods they were intended to, and are allowed to graze in a pasture, they are healthier and then their products are healthier for us to eat!
4. **Eat more fiber.** Increased intake of fiber will lower your estrogen levels. Women need at least 25 grams of fiber a day and may benefit from 35 to 45 grams per day.
5. **Exercise.** Exercise decreases estrogen levels and helps you make more of the good estrogens. And as you know exercise will help lower your stress.
6. **Sleep.** Going to sleep by 10pm provides optimal production of melatonin, which lowers estradiol. Try to turn off all screens at least 30 minutes before bedtime otherwise the blue light will interfere with melatonin.

The Hormone Cure. Sara Gottfried, MD