

good health **KC**

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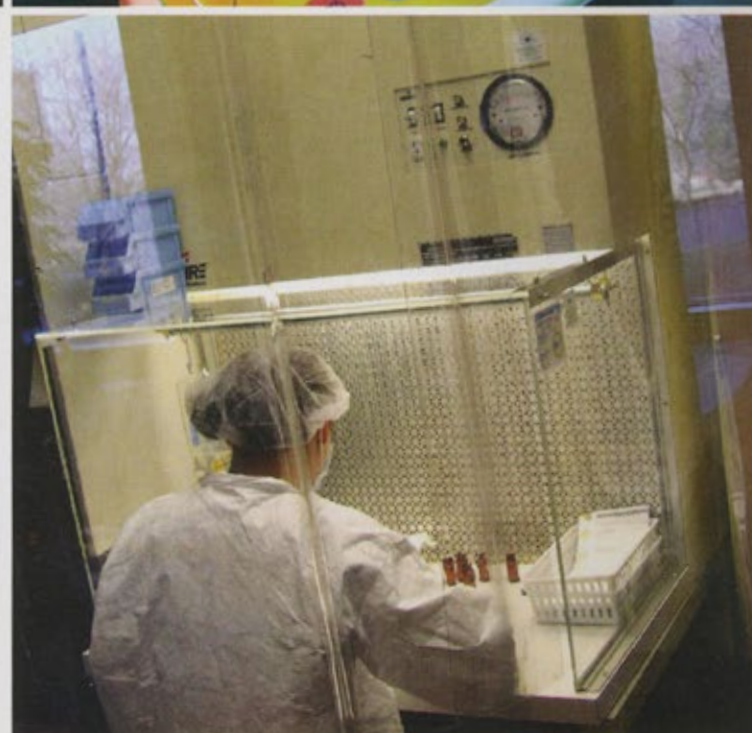
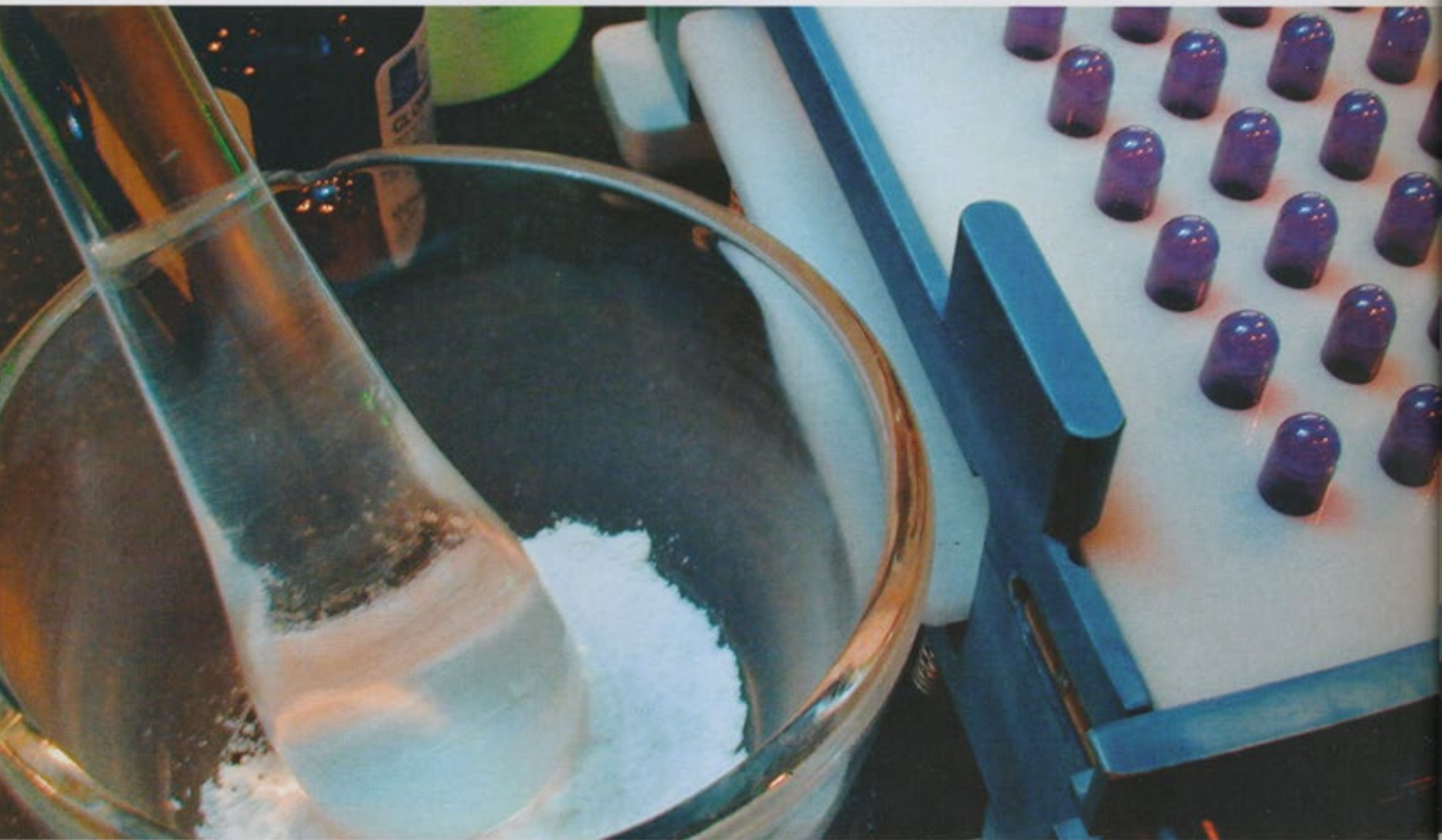
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have it your way

This is becoming the mantra for custom hormone therapy advocates, but not without cautious words from local experts.



Stark Pharmacy
This local pharmacy has four locations and specializes in custom hormone therapy.

molecules, says Karen Butler, a pharmacist at Stark Pharmacy (5701 W. 119th St., Overland Park). A bioidentical hormone will have those same molecules in exactly the same spot as the ones in your body. "Your body is not really going to know the difference," she says. "It knows what to do with it, how to process it, how to use it and eliminate it."

Synthetic hormones have been altered so they can be patented. The synthetic estrogen traditionally used, called Premarin, is made from horse urine. Synthetics do not biochemically match what is produced in the body. "For some women it doesn't matter; for others it can cause a lot of havoc," Butler says. "It is not necessarily bad for you. But is it good for you? Not necessarily."

Bioidentical hormones also are customizable. Synthetic medications are made in a few strengths, but bioidenticals are mixed by a compounding pharmacy in concentrations tailored to each person. However, Butler says, patients taking bioidentical hormones should expect to be well-monitored, especially when they begin taking the replacements.

At Stark Pharmacy, experts provide a questionnaire to review symptoms and problems a patient is experiencing. They take a medical history, do lab work to check for hormonal imbalances, and then the pharmacist often will provide recommendations to the physician regarding the exact dosage a patient needs.

Although there are benefits to choosing bioidentical hormones, Dr. Amanda Chaney, a physician at Woodside Health and Tennis Club (2000 W. 47th Place, Westwood), cautions that they aren't always a cure-all.

Chaney prescribes bioidentical hormones for some of her patients, but she admits that it is a controversial therapy. Women seek hormone replacement for conditions including PMS, infertility, menopause and fibroid cysts, but she says it shouldn't necessarily be the first solution. She often uses it as a last resort.

"They are hormones, and just because they're natural doesn't mean they are harmless," she says. "They aren't safe in all regards ... they are delicate, and you have to be very savvy about using them."

In 2002, the Women's Health Initiative found that traditional hormone replacement therapy might increase the risk of conditions like breast cancer and cardiovascular disease, but bioidentical hormones were not included in the study. The American Congress of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG) reports that these products have the same safety issues as traditional hormone therapies, and there are additional concerns regarding the safety of bioidentical hormones because they haven't been studied as long.

So how do you choose a remedy when in the throes of a hot flash? Do your research. If you are going to use bioidentical hormones, know the risks and potential side effects. Talk to your doctor about the therapy and work with a pharmacy that is experienced and knowledgeable.

For some, they work wonders. Without the hormones, Everett doesn't think she would be as functional as she is. "I'm better at what I do in my 50s than I was in my 40s," she says. "A whole generation is coming into our wisdom, and it is sad if we don't have the capacity to share it."

[story by] TAMMY WORTH

Custom hormone replacement therapy has become a hot topic within health and pharmaceutical industries. Some tout it as a miracle-worker for those suffering from hot flashes, infertility and other hormonal imbalances, but others are telling patients to approach with caution.

isa Everett's hormonal roller coaster began in her 20s when she was suffering from postpartum depression. Her doctor wanted to put her on an antidepressant, but she would have had to quit nursing, an option she wasn't keen on with her firstborn. Instead, she chose to take a hormone replacement, progesterone, which relieved her symptoms.

When menopause hit in Everett's 40s, she was plagued by random bouts of crying, debilitating exhaustion, depression, anxiety and mental foginess. This time, she turned to low doses of estrogen for relief. "[natural] hormones turned my life around," she says. "I was skeptical initially but made a pact with the universe that if they worked, I would give other women the benefit of my knowledge and experience."

Everett, a pharmacist and clinical nutritionist for O'Brien Pharmacy (5453 W. 61st Place, Mission), has spent her career treating patients with what she credits with changing her life: bioidentical hormones.

Bioidentical hormones, also called natural or custom hormones, are prepared and packaged in a specific dose for patients by a pharmacy. Some of the most commonly used bioidentical hormones are testosterone, progesterone and estrogen. In recent years, bioidentical hormones have been lauded as a miraculous cure for menopause by celebrities such as Suzanne Somers and Oprah Winfrey. But they also are criticized by some in the medical field who say they are not any safer than pharmaceutical-based hormones.

Bioidentical hormones are derived from plants such as yams or soy and are chemically the same as those produced in the body. A molecule of estrogen, for example, is made up of carbon, hydrogen and oxygen

the doctor {Q} I feel so tired and lifeless all the time. How can I get through the day with more energy?

is in

This expert takes a natural approach to answer your wellness questions.



Dr. Amanda Chaney is a NABNE board-certified naturopathic doctor, using natural, non-invasive therapies to treat common conditions. She specializes in clinical nutrition, botanical medicine, homeopathy, diet and lifestyle intervention and nutraceuticals at Woodside Health & Tennis Club (2000 W. 47th St., Westwood).

Have a question for our wellness experts?
Email info@ghkc.com and look for your question in future issues.

{Q} I feel so tired and lifeless all the time. How can I get through the day with more energy?

Life can be exhausting. I would estimate that more than half my patients complain of generalized fatigue, whether physical (body) or psychological (mind). With physical fatigue, your muscles can't do things as easily as they used to. You might notice this when you climb stairs or carry grocery bags. With psychological fatigue, it might be difficult to concentrate. In severe cases, you might not feel like getting out of bed and doing your daily activities.

So what's making you so tired all the time? There are numerous lifestyle choices that contribute to fatigue, from the food we eat or a lack of fluid and fiber in our diets to the toxins we ingest via plastics, herbicides and food additives—they all take their toll. In some cases, however, fatigue is a symptom of hormone imbalances, adrenal dysfunction, sleep disturbances, low blood sugar or lack of exercise. So though some causes are rooted in more serious medical conditions, many more causes are self-inflicted and almost totally avoidable. Making small lifestyle changes with your diet can give a jumpstart to your energy level.

{Q} I've heard a lot of talk surrounding supplements, but how do I know what's most important to take?

No one's in a hurry to kick the bucket, so people fight their terminal fate by exercising, eating right and enjoying life. But there is one more thing to do: take nutritional supplements. As kids, we could take one Flintstones chewable for an extra boost, but as we age, our needs become more complex. Beyond Bedrock, here are some nutritional supplements we need:

- **Multivitamins:** Now let's be clear, taking a multivitamin is not an excuse to avoid vegetables. But as our environment becomes more polluted, our food supply deviates further from how nature intended animals and plants to grow, and our stress levels climb ever higher. Odds are our micronutrient needs are much higher than we think.
- **Omega-3 Fish Oil:** The phrase "you are what you eat" is especially true when it comes to fats. So if your diet is currently laden with garbage fats, it's no surprise if you look and feel like garbage as well. Look for the active ingredients EPA and DHA; they are the winning ticket for body transformation benefits.
- **Probiotics:** Good flora is essential to maintain good digestive health and proper intestinal functioning, increasing the health of the entire body. Furthermore, they also play a significant role in immune function and help to keep harmful yeast and bacteria under control.

{Q} What exactly is a body detox?

Summer has arrived, and a great way to get ready for it is to clean out your body with a natural detox. You'll re-energize yourself, feel good and lose those extra winter pounds. Natural detoxification is a key body function that eliminates metabolic waste and other toxins via the eliminatory organs: the skin, kidneys and liver. Modern-day living has led to increased exposure to toxins in food and drink, alcohol, cigarettes, medications, cosmetics and household cleaning products, not to mention pollution and environmental poisons.

Detoxification is not a "one-size-fits-all" approach. There are many ways to effectively cleanse the body, but it should always be customized for you. A detox isn't where you fast or starve yourself, but where you consume natural, wholesome foods and/or supplements and cut out processed food and drinks. Consult a physician before doing anything extreme.

As for the perks: Immediate physical benefits include improved energy, lowered blood pressure, weight loss, fewer aches and pains, stronger immunity and healthier skin and nails. It also calms the mind, gives a sense of inner peace and can improve one's self-esteem. ■