

LEARN TO LOVE YOUR HORMONES

JOURNEY TO WELLNESS

MAKE YOUR HORMONES WORK IN YOUR FAVOR

FOUNDATIONS OF HEALTH

YOUR HORMONE GUIDE

FOUNDATIONS OF HEALTH

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HELLO LOVELY LADY,

Thanks for joining our community and taking the time to educate yourself about your body and hormonal health.

My goal for the information I share with you in this guide to help you learn the basics about your cycle. While we're not going to dive deep into the details, my hope is that this can help those who may be just starting their period, help those who have been never understood their period, and those who have dreaded their period for years. THIS IS FOR YOU.

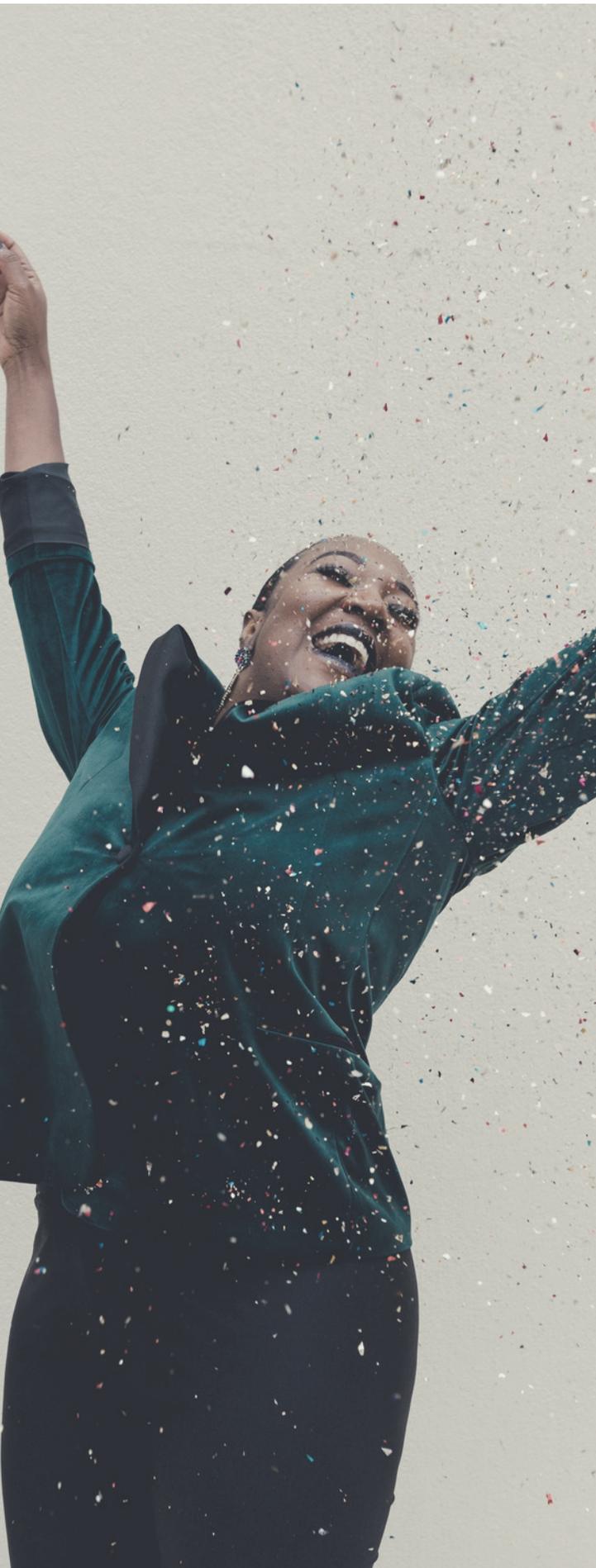
The truth is a symptomatic period means there is something wrong. An imbalance, inflammation, or even insulin signaling issues happening that I want to help you address. You shouldn't have to deal with period issues every month and you should not need advil to get through them.

These are all signs from your body reaching out for attention. You may have heard that your menstrual cycle is like a monthly report card for your overall health. When our bodies are happy and healthy your entire cycle should come and go smoothly, Your cycles should be relatively painless, a manageable flow, no emotional instability, no feeling like your clothes or bras only fit half the month, and it should come consistently.

I want to help you attain stability where you can make your hormones work for you- not against you. I got rid of the mentality long ago that "that time of month is a hardship" and I want to empower you to come to the same realization. Hormones can give us super powers, literally. We need to stop normalizing PMS and if not for yourself- for your daughters, nieces, friends, mothers and strangers. Women are powerful and our voices are getting louder. It's time that women's health concerns be taken seriously, We deserve options beyond just the birth control pill, we deserve research studies to take into account how the cyclical nature of women's body can change what we are seeing in our studies, and we need to be heard and be validated with support from our doctors. Period. (pun intended).

So cheers, to taking your first or another powerful step in learning about your body and taking the time to gain awareness about your health and hormones.

with health and happiness,
Dr. Molly Sears, ND



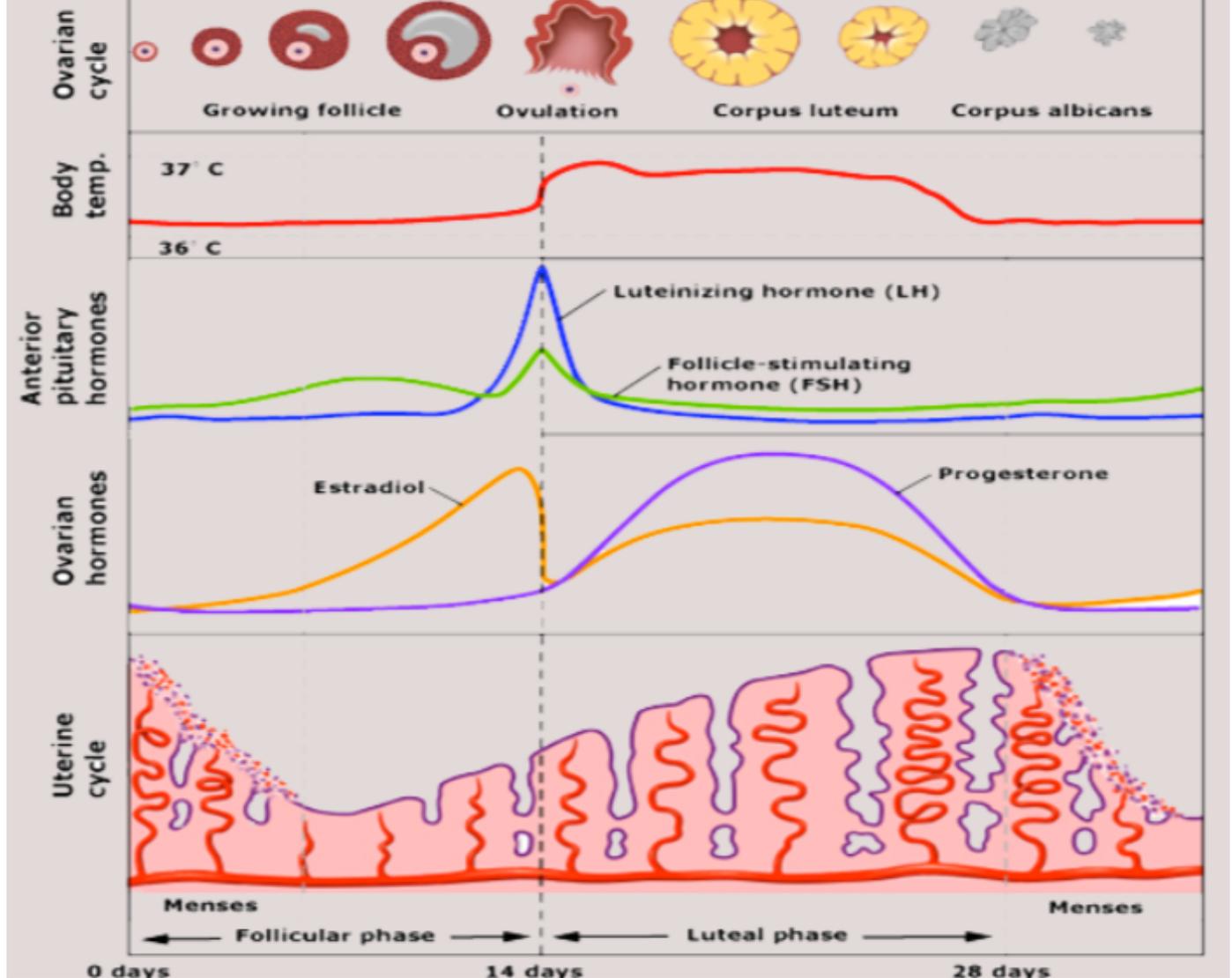
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The Basics of your menstrual cycle

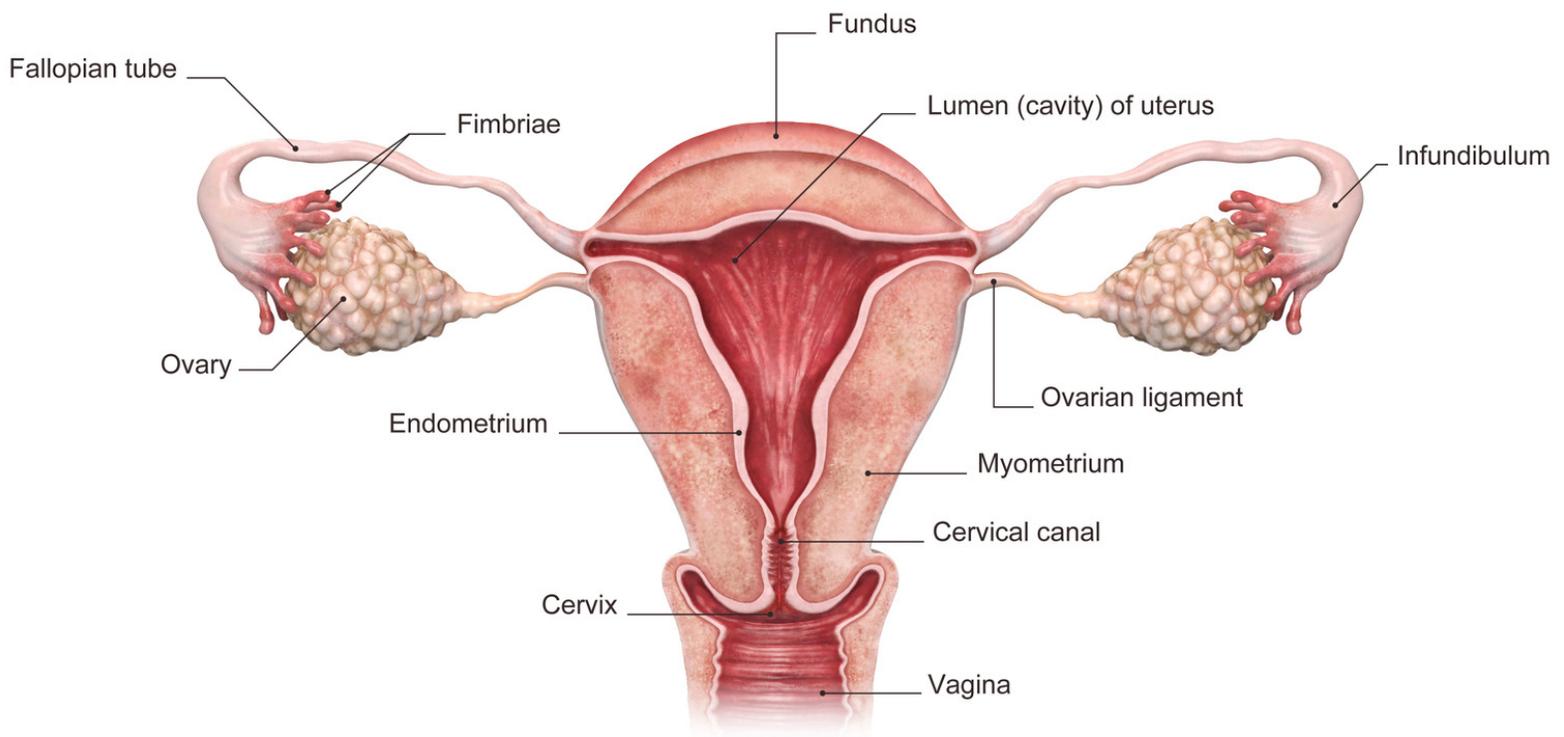
Timeline of the Menstrual Cycle:

From the image above you can see the menstrual cycle refers to the entire month, not just the days of bleeding. It can be simply broken down into the Follicular Phase and the Luteal Phase.

The image above looks complicated but if we break it down together. On the left side of the graph it tells us where in the body that part of the graph is showing. So starting from the top of the image we see the changes happening in our Ovaries (where our eggs are hanging inside the follicle), then our body temperature, next a part of our Brain (the anterior pituitary gland), the hormones being released from our ovaries, and finally the inside of our Uterus (which is the substance we will actually shed as our menstrual blood during our menses). For a great explanation of these changes check out The Khan Academy on youtube about the reproductive cycle.

The purpose of the Uterus and the changes it goes through during the cycle is to be able to support a pregnancy if needed. Our Uterus's walls are signaled through our hormones from our brain and ovaries to thicken in order to let the beginning of a baby (a tiny group of cells) embed into the wall of the uterus. It wants to provide a cushion for these cells to grow and evolve into a baby. You can think of it like a cradle for a baby- no baby is going to be happy in a wooden cradle with no padding, we have to make it comfy and cozy. Without this thickening the baby would not be able to attach to our walls and would not have a hospitable environment to grow into a viable pregnancy. Working to thicken this wall is often a treatment for women struggling with fertility.

The Uterus



Demonstrated in the graph, you can see that our brain (the anterior pituitary hormones) release Follicular Stimulating Hormone (FSH) and Luteinizing Hormone (LH). FSH does exactly what the name says, it stimulates our Follicles (eggs) to grow in our ovaries. As our follicles grow in our ovaries the cells release Estrogen.

This is our dominant hormone during the first half of our cycle. As the Estrogen levels rise, this signals our Uterus to build that endometrial layer. When the follicle is ready and all our signaling aligns we get the release of the Egg, found within the follicle in the Ovary. After ovulation when this egg is released the follicle that was holding the egg now becomes a source of progesterone. These arm like structures that come off the uterus as if they're reaching out for a big hug are called Fallopian Tubes. At the end of the fallopian tubes are these finger like projections and these wiggle to scoop our released egg to safety. The egg then makes the journey down the fallopian tubes during about a three day period. At this point our egg will potentially meet a sperm and together embed into our Uterine walls. Progesterone (the dominant hormone in the second half of our cycle has taken over to keep the walls thick as baby grows. If there is no baby our Progesterone is not needed so it drops (along with our estrogen) and this drop in the progesterone levels is what tells our Uterus we don't need the thick walls and the women will begin to get rid of that tissue and that is what we bleed out during our menses.



THE MAIN PHASES:

Follicular Phase

This phase can be broken down into your Menses (Days of bleeding) and your proliferative phase (days our body builds up our endometrial layer). Our endometrial layer is the padding inside our Uterus.

The Luteal Phase

This phase is also known as the Secretory phase. This is where our corpus luteum (the name for the follicle that held the egg during the follicular phase) is releasing progesterone which will "ripen" our Uterine lining so that it is soft for egg and sperm to embed. So simply the luteal phase will start at ovulation and end day one of bleeding.

Ovulation

The event that divides the two phases (follicular and Luteal) is Ovulation. This is the release of your egg from the follicle in the ovary.

THE MAIN PLAYERS:

FSH and LH

These hormones signal to help create and release your egg and support our estrogen levels. This extra estrogen tells our LH to increase even more and this surge in the LH is what tells your body to ovulate.

Estrogen

High levels: Breast tenderness / Fibrocystic breasts Heavy and irregular menses Fibroids Tearfulness Apathy / anxiety Burn out and low mood Decreased sex drive Melasma Fluid retention PMS Weight gain in the hips and waist

Low levels: Decreased sex drive / sensation Dry skin / hair/ vaginal tissues Foggy thinking Headaches / migraines Heart palpitations Increased facial and body hair Joint pain Night sweats, insomnia Brain fog and decreased concentration Urinary incontinence

Progesterone

High levels: Acne Breast tenderness Constipation Swelling and fluid retention Heavy / irregular menses Mood swings Weight gain Hives / allergies

Low levels: Anxiety Brain fog Cramping Cravings for sweets Low mood / irritability Fibrocystic breasts Hot flashes / night sweats Painful intercourse Spotting before period / short cycles PMS Feeling cold

IS YOUR PERIOD "NORMAL"?

For the record I dislike the word "normal". In my practice I don't like to aim for normal, but rather optimal. For this discussion normal just means that there is absence of serious disease or concern. As women we have normalized so many things about our menses that is not acceptable. In case you're unaware it is not normal to suffer from any PMS symptoms like mood changes, cramps, acne, bloating, loose stools, etc. Just as there is a difference between normal and optimal, there is also a distinction I like to make between normal and common. PMS, although COMMON, is not NORMAL and definitely NOT OPTIMAL.



THERE'S A BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OPTIMAL AND NORMAL. JUST AS THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NORMAL VS. COMMON.

Things we should take note of about our period:

Cycle Length: 21-35days (but consistent). Your first day of FULL bleeding (not spotting) counts as day 1. We then count until your next day of bleeding to determine your cycle length. Cycles shorter or longer than this range can hint to various conditions and/or hormonal imbalance.

Period Length:A normal period ranges anywhere from 21-35 days; as long as it's consistent
Days of Bleeding: 3-7days

Blood Color: RED, not dark. no clotting.

Flow amount: An optimal period would be a stronger/heavier bleed for the first two days of you cycle and then taper off the rest of the week. Spotting prior to your period may indicate your progesterone levels are deficient.

PMS: NONE. you should not get any symptoms with your cycle if all things are optimal. This mean bloating, loose stools, cramping, pain, nausea and vomiting, headaches, acne, mood changes, insomnia, and all those other fun things you go through should NOT be happening. Your body is trying to tell you something through these symptoms and its my job to translate this to you and help your body be heard and help you regain control and hormonal health.

LET'S DISCOVER YOUR PMS SUBTYPE

PMS A: The Anxiety Subtype

The symptoms:

Emotional (irritable and frustrated), brain fog, stressed, tight muscle, nervous tension, anxious, mood swings and lashing out. Possibly spotting prior to your period.

The culprit: Low Progesterone

The Solution

Eat progesterone supporting foods: Sesame seeds and sunflower seeds. Aim for 1tbsp daily during the second half of your cycle. These seeds provide a healthy dose of good fat (which is a vital to make our hormones)

PMS C: The Cravings Subtype

The symptoms:

Feeling lightheaded or hANGRY, dizziness, heart palpitations, headaches, craving sweet and salty snacks, and difficulty sleeping

The culprit: Low levels of Androgens

The Solution:

Focus your treatments on your adrenals. Do this through the use of adaptogenic herbs, regulating your sleep and wake cycle, and managing your stress/cortisol



PMS H: The Hyperhydration Subtype

The symptoms

Water retention, bloating, breast pain, swelling
Impressions on ankles from socks or waist from belts/pants,
having skin that tends to break out and be oily

The culprit: Too many androgens

The Solution:

Focus on stabilizing blood sugar through avoiding high glycemic foods like refined carbs, sugars, processed foods. Try to decrease Salty snacks (especially the second half of your cycle). Engage your body in aerobic exercise to help move the fluid. Finally try Seed cycling throughout your cycle to regulate hormones. Additionally consuming large amounts of spearmint tea can naturally assist clearance of androgens

PMS D: The Depressed subtype

The symptoms

Feeling of sadness, hopelessness, and tearing up or crying more easily than normal, sleep issues (insomnia or sleeping too much), and difficulty with focus and/or motivation.

The culprit: Low estrogen

The Solution:

Focus on getting adequate fat into your diet. These serve as the building blocks for our hormones so making sure we are providing our bodies with the nutrients it needs to create hormones like estrogen. A effective way to do this is adding a Tbsp of flax and pumpkin seeds throughout the first half of your cycle. Maca has also been shown in the literature to help raise the estrogen level. Incorporating these changes will result in signaling our bodies to re-establish optimal estrogen levels.





THE CHANGES YOU CAN MAKE TO HELP YOUR HORMONES WORK IN YOUR FAVOR

DURING MENSES:

Estrogen and progesterone are at their lowest during your period. Use this downtime to reflect on the past month and set an intention for next month. Use this time to recharge, and rest, with gentle aerobic exercise, whole foods and quality sleep every night.

DURING YOUR FOLLICULAR PHASE:

Rising estrogen leaves you feeling confident, full of energy and ready to take on the world. Use this time of growth and maturation to try new hobbies, make big plans, and take action in your profession. Try to schedule important meetings or interviews during this time.

DURING OVULATION:

You are at your most fertile and shining inside and out. Naturally, you will feel and seem more attractive and marketable. This is the perfect time for engaging in a social setting, public speaking and meeting new people.

DURING YOUR LUTEAL PHASE:

Progesterone peaks after ovulation, which has a calming effect on our mind and body. This is a great time to clean out that kitchen, organize your work desk and check things off your to-do list. The luteal phase is known in my world as your "nesting" phase.



LESSONS TO SHARE

The wisdom that is passed down through women is beautiful. One of the best and most rewarding aspects of my job is getting to share information to women about their own body that brings them to a level of enlightenment, understanding, and acceptance.

We experience our menses every single month. That is almost a fourth of our reproductive years and yet our understanding of what is happening in our very bodies is so poorly understood by most.

I truly believe we can be doing better as a society and specifically as health practitioners to be better at educating our women, our friends, our daughters and sons about the reproductive cycle.

In research the cycling nature of a women's body is harder to study because it introduces a number of variables and that has resulted in a whole aspect of a women's physiology being ignored for years in the medical research.

This has translated to women not feeling heard by doctors when they bring up certain symptoms. Women are told consistently "well that is just normal symptoms of a menses" or "theres nothing that proves hormonal contraception can cause fertility issues, or x,y,z" This thinking is relatively archaic and these statements are greatly flawed.

Women are so powerful, and If I can pass any message regarding women's health along it is that your experience with birth control, your symptoms you get on or off the pill, through puberty, through fertility struggles, through menses, menopause and beyond -is just that. It is your experience. It is real. There are physiological reasons why you are going through many of your symptoms and there are ways to take these symptoms and translate these messages from the body. I wish all women the power of attaining optimal hormonal health.



Learn more about your
hormonal health at
drmollysearsnd.com

Some blog posts you may be interested in you can find at
drmollysearsnd.com on topics listed below:

Female fat loss and the menstrual cycle

Egg quality

Endometriosis

Post Birth Control Syndrome

PMS

Thyroid health

Insomnia

+more!