



DR. RANDOLPH'S
AGELESS & WELLNESS
MEDICAL CENTER



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Ageless & Wellness News

Volume 2, Number 23

Dear Ageless and Wellness,



"Every bite of food you put into your body is either making you healthier -- or not... The primary role of the hormone leptin is to regulate the overall relationship between hunger and activity in your body."

-- C.W. Randolph, Jr. M.D.

In this issue, we continue our series on how our food choices affect healthy hormone balance with **"How Food Affects Hormone Balance: Leptin Resistance."**

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How Food Affects Hormone Balance: Leptin Resistance



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In this month's issue, we discuss another hormone that is affected by the foods you eat: leptin, sometimes called the "satiety" hormone. Thanksgiving may be over, but the season of "giving" has just begun. So let's give ourselves a reminder: We are what we eat! At the AWMC, we believe that eating healthy good food is an important act of self-care, a gift that you can give to yourself every day!

As we discussed in our [previous issue](#), every bite of food you put into your body is either making you healthier -- or not. What you choose to eat is either helping healthy hormonal production, or hormonal imbalance. Hormones control our digestion, our moods, our energy, our libido, our metabolism, and more. When we do not eat food with the nutrients our bodies need, we cannot expect our bodies to effectively produce the hormones we need. Without the "building blocks" for healthy hormones, our bodies cannot maintain hormonal balance!

Remember that we always recommend you avoid, or at least minimize, "processed foods." Most processed foods are literally "designed" in a food science lab to elicit overwhelming biochemical signals compelling us to eat more. These nutrient-poor foods made with synthetic chemicals are cheap to manufacture; they overstimulate our taste buds and alter our hormones in surprisingly widespread ways. Think about it: fruit-flavored candy is far sweeter than real fruit. Potato chips are saltier and more addictive than real potatoes! Why? These are products, not real food. It is easy for our bodies to get "dazzled" by the "supernormal stimuli" in processed foods, and we get fooled into eating them again and again.

Leptin (the "satiety" hormone) is secreted by your fat cells in response to the amount of fat that is already stored. (If you remember our [last article](#), the hormone insulin moves blood sugar (glucose) from your bloodstream into storage in your cells for later energy use.) Leptin has a different job: it tells your brain how much body fat you have stored in your cells, to help regulate energy intake and energy expenditure -- in other words, to keep your body fat levels balanced.

Leptin levels in your body are typically in line with your eating schedule. For example, in a normal "leptin sensitive" body, leptin levels are low in the morning, so that you wake up hungry, and high in the evening, so that you go to bed feeling full. The primary role of this hormone is to regulate the overall relationship between hunger and activity in your body. From an evolutionary standpoint, body fat allowed us to survive periods of food shortage or illness. Fat cells use leptin as a method for measuring how much energy/fat is available for use in the body. Your brain then directs your eating and activity behavior in response to leptin's important message.

Here's how it works: if your leptin levels are low (like they are in the morning, OR if you have body fat that is too low),

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your brain receives and responds to leptin's signal by telling you: Slow Down and Eat! Your metabolism slows down, you are less active, and you eat more until leptin again signals the brain that there is enough fat in storage. Then leptin levels rise, and your brain tells you: Stop Eating Now and Get Moving! This interplay is what keeps your body fat and energy levels balanced.

However, when you eat too many processed foods, simple carbs, and high-sugar meals, your system gets overwhelmed with glucose -- remember how insulin resistance happens? The sugar gets used up for energy first, and meanwhile: the body fat accumulates. The excess glucose and triglycerides also mess up your brain's ability to receive leptin's signals, and you develop **leptin resistance**.

When your brain and other tissues are no longer sensitive to leptin's messages, your hormonal energy/fat balance goes haywire. Your brain isn't getting the message that you have enough fat! Your brain does not see the number on the scale, or the reflection in the mirror -- it can only respond to internal hormonal signals. So, you keep on eating. Your fat cells may be churning out leptin, but your brain cannot get the message. And when the "supernormal stimuli" of processed foods are calling like a siren song: well, you get the picture.

Another complication is not enough sleep. Studies have shown that chronic sleep loss is associated with lowered levels of leptin, and higher levels of "ghrelin," a hormone that stimulates your appetite. When you eat too many high-sugar processed foods AND don't get enough sleep, you have a perfect storm. When estrogen dominance and insulin resistance and leptin resistance collide? Time to get back in balance!

What can you do? We always recommend you have all your hormone levels checked. This helps establish a baseline for understanding what problems you are dealing with. Bioidentical hormones can help with deficiencies in sex hormones like estrogen, progesterone, or testosterone. Balancing out estrogen can help you lose weight, and reduces the amount of fat you have in storage! Patients often sleep better when hormone-related symptoms like hot flashes are under control, further reducing leptin imbalance. And those who learn to pay attention to the foods they eat, by reducing processed foods and "eating clean," with healthy fats and low sugar -- they can experience the full benefits of hormone balance.

Got holiday stress? Be careful what you eat! In our next issue, we will discuss how food affects cortisol.

We wish you a Happy Healthy Holiday!

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