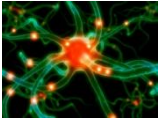


Salivary Hormone Testing

By Jennifer Cochran, Naturopath



What are hormones?

Hormones are chemical messengers secreted by your body which carry information from one cell to another. Together with the nervous system, our hormones regulate many key body functions to achieve and maintain optimal health. Important hormonal systems include your reproductive, adrenal and thyroid hormones, with imbalances in one hormonal system, typically affecting one or more of the others. For example, chronic stress involves over-secretion of 'stress' hormones by the adrenal glands, which can adversely impact both thyroid and reproductive hormone balance. Hormonal imbalances can cause many health disturbances including menstrual problems, fertility issues, weight gain or loss, stress, fatigue, poor memory & concentration and sleep disorders.

Why test saliva instead of blood?

Serum (blood) testing reflects total hormones, while salivary testing reflects 'free' or bio-available hormone levels. This distinction is important because steroid hormones are typically bound to proteins in the blood, which makes them unavailable to cells. Salivary hormone testing has been shown to provide an accurate assessment of hormonal status in both men and women. If imbalances in 'free' hormones are identified, then therapeutic interventions can be designed to help to rebalance your free hormones.



What hormones can be tested with saliva?

Salivary hormone testing is primarily used for testing male & female reproductive hormones (oestrogens (E1, E2 & E3), testosterone, progesterone (P4) & DHEA-S). Salivary testing is also commonly used for testing levels of the 'stress' or adrenal hormone cortisol and the 'sleep' hormone melatonin. However, a blood test is required to test thyroid hormones.

Common hormonal imbalances seen in clinic

These include excess cortisol, oestrogen dominance and oestrogen insufficiency:

Cortisol

Chronic stress, whether it be mental, emotional or physical, triggers the secretion of large amounts of cortisol from the adrenal glands. Whilst cortisol has an anti-inflammatory and immune-stimulant effect in the short term, chronic (long-term) cortisol leads to immune suppression, which increases the likelihood of contracting infections like colds and flu's. Unfortunately it is true that eventually chronic stress does catch up with you! When the body can no longer produce enough cortisol to meet your daily needs, you are left feeling exhausted and possibly with symptoms of depression, trouble sleeping, diabetes and cardiovascular or other degenerative disease to name but a few.



Oestrogen dominance



The term oestrogen dominance describes an excess of oestrogens relative to progesterone. Stress, ovarian dysfunction, insulin resistance, nutritional insufficiencies, depressed thyroid function and exposure to environmental oestrogen-like toxins such as pesticides and

plastics can all contribute to oestrogen dominance. Common symptoms resulting from oestrogen dominance include weight gain, fluid retention and migraines. Oestrogen dominance can also lead to the over-stimulation of tissues such as in the breasts and uterus, which may lead to cancer.



Oestrogen insufficiency



This is primarily associated with menopause when ovarian secretion of oestrogen declines. However, insufficient oestrogen may also occur where body fat is particularly low. Symptoms of low or insufficient oestrogen many include hot flushes, vaginal dryness, excessive bone loss and foggy thinking. While menopause is a natural process which is supposed to occur, various interventions are available to assist with the transition to a low oestrogen state.

How is a salivary hormone test done?

After obtaining a referral from your naturopath or other qualified health care practitioner, you can order and pay for a salivary hormone test kit by contacting the functional pathology lab directly, either over the phone or online. Depending on the hormones being tested, saliva is expressed into a plastic tube at one or more times during the day from the comfort of your own home. Detailed instructions are included with each salivary hormone kit. You then post the completed saliva samples back to the pathology lab in a reply paid envelope, along with the referral from your health care practitioner.

Treatment of hormonal imbalances



The results of your salivary hormone test are sent to the referring health care practitioner, who then interpret them and recommends a treatment plan. In some cases further pathology testing may be required to properly assess the necessary treatment. For example, low progesterone levels may be a result of thyroid hormone imbalances. Therefore, identifying and correcting thyroid hormone imbalances may also be required to correct low progesterone. Otherwise, treatment may involve a combination of diet & lifestyle changes and herbal and/or nutritional supplementation.



If you think salivary testing may be applicable to your current health concerns, simply call **9375 1300** to make an appointment to discuss your testing & treatment options.

Yours in health & wellness,

Jennifer

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