

A sunburst graphic with numerous thin, light gray lines radiating from a central point behind the text.

Healthy Moms Podcast

BY **Wellness Mama**[®]
simple answers for healthier families

Episode 152: Foods for Hormone Balance With
Magdalena Wszelaki

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

This podcast is brought to you by Air Doctor. Did you know that the air inside our homes can be up to 500 times as dirty as the air outside? It can be filled with harmful VOC's, allergens, bacteria and more. I've been looking for an air filter that filters out all of these substances and is quiet and that doesn't break the bank, for a long time. And the Air Doctor filter meets all my criteria. It removes almost 100% of particles from the air, including VOCs, those are things released from candles, paint, building materials, carpeting, cleaning products, hairspray, air fresheners are more. Filters out pollen and other allergens, pet dander and animal hair, mold spores and dust mites, cigarette and cigar smoke, and viruses, germs and bacteria. One of my favorite things about it is what they call auto mode where the fan speed basically adjusts to the appropriate level based on the current air condition in the home. It's been really fascinating to see in our house, for instance, the filters speed up when we've cooked food at high heat, or used cleaners that someone gave us that we thought were natural but they made the filters speed up. I know air filters can be pricey which is why I've teamed up with Air Doctor to get a massive discount for listeners. You can get 50% off right now by going to wellnessmama.com/go/air-doctor to get the discount. You can also find the link in the show notes at wellnessmama.fm

This podcast is brought to you by Four Sigmatic. My kitchen is always stocked with their coffee mushroom blends, their Matcha mix, and their straight mushroom drinks. Four Sigmatic has figured out how to get the benefits of mushrooms like chaga, lions mane, cordyceps and reishi into delicious instant drinks. My current favorite is their adaptogen coffee blend that has torsi and astragalus. But I love all of their products. They have options with or without caffeine so if you're not a caffeine person you can find products that you will love. And I find that even their coffee blends that do contain caffeine have less than a normal cup of coffee. But don't let this fool you. I have found that I get so much more focus and mental clarity from these mushroom blends than I do from regular coffee, and without the jitters. The addition of the mushrooms, which are considered nootropics, meaning that they are good for the brain makes these super food blends more effective and much healthier than just regular old coffee. I love them with a dash of macadamia milk personally. I also love that many of their drink mixes are instant and packaged into individual servings so they are perfect for travel or on the go. If you're listening to this, then you can get a special offer just for listeners of this podcast by going to wellnessmama.com/go/four-sigmatic.

Katie: Hello and welcome to "The Healthy Moms Podcast." I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com. And today's episode is going to be super helpful for any women listening, especially anyone struggling with any kind of hormone imbalance. Because I am here with Magdalena Wszelaki, I hope I pronounced it right, who is the author of "Cooking for Hormone Balance," the founder of Hormones Balance, a nutrition coaching practice dedicated to helping women rebalance their hormones with food and herbs. She's a certified nutrition coach, a speaker, an educator. And she herself has a long history of health challenges starting with, like I think a lot of us, a highly stressful life. For her, it was advertising and then going through Grave's and Hashimoto's, and then adrenal fatigue and estrogen dominance. And thanks to her journey, she's now in full remission and lives a symptom-free life, and also teaches many other women how to accomplish the same. And we're gonna delve into all of that today. Magdalena, welcome and thanks for being here.

Magdalena: Oh, Katie, I'm so excited, thank you.

Katie: Oh, I'm so excited to chat with you as well. I think, as I'm sure you would agree, hormones are such an important issue and a partially a misunderstood one. And I wanna delve deep but first I wanna hear your story because I think there's so much hope and inspiration in your own journey and I think so much to learn. So take

us through your own health struggles.

Magdalena: Yeah. Katie, you know how oftentimes we like to tell a story from the day we were diagnosed with something, and in my case, it was in 2008 with Hashimoto's, so we have that one thing in common. But, you know, when I look back now at my life it started pretty much from the time I was pregnant. My mom has always been very anxious, was a smoker. When I was born I was not a breastfed baby. My mom bought into the 1970s formula, you know, miracle story. And right from the beginning really weak immune system. I mean, I was down with pneumonia when I was two months old in a hospital for, you know, for a month on antibiotics, right?

And, you know, and all of that manifested in so many different sensitivities, which obviously at that point my mom had no idea. And so, you know, things like eczema, I had constant ear infections. I don't remember...you know, you don't remember much when you're five years old unless something pretty traumatic. In my case, it was regular visits to the doctor to get ear drainage done because I had so much pus in my ears all the time. And like it happens with a lot of sensitivities, they evolved over years to something different. So in my 20s then I was walking around with a constant PMS, migraines that pretty much came on every day, and horrible cystic acne.

I mean I had, Katie, I had...I was covered. It wasn't just on my face but it was also on my back, on my front, on my butt. I never owned an open shirt in front and the back because it's hard to cover up cystic acne, you know, with make-up. And so, you know, in my late 20s I was diagnosed very luckily to have hyperthyroidism, most probably it was Grave's, who knows, you know, I wasn't tested at that point and I was given a beta-blocker as the doctor would do. Never addressing the root cause, so I had no idea what was even causing it. And of course when you know, when you don't work with the underlying causes of autoimmunity it comes back with a vengeance a lot of the time.

And that's when in 2008 finally the diagnoses was made, I had Hashimoto's with screaming antibodies, horrendous fatigue. I started having anxiety attacks which I had never had in my life. You know, and memory lapses. And when you work in a high power job in advertising and at that time I was based in Shanghai and I had a regional job, and I worked on Fortune 100 brands, you can't afford to have memory lapses and anxiety attacks, and having...you know, writing stupid emails to a client because you had a bit of a moment. But that...you know, but that's when, I think my intuition really told me that if I don't change something about my life and combined with my lifestyle, but also living in China where I had zero control over what I was putting in my body and how my clients would, you know, treat us.

I knew deep in my heart that I had to change something and I ended up resigning from my job, taking a much slower job, moving to the United States, went to nutrition school, and which really opened me up to the whole idea of how food can reverse all of that, and it did. And as much as this sounds like a simple story, I will say that I am not a straightforward case. I wish that I could tell you that. I got off gluten and I did a couple of detoxes and, you know, my Hashimoto's got totally reversed. It helped a lot but along the way it was a lot more with dealing with a lot of different gut issues with SIBO, H. pylori, and episodes of Candida that just couldn't be addressed no matter what I did, parasites.

So it was a long journey but, you know, I have to say I turned the corner and today as a 45-year-old woman, I feel better than when I was 25. And just six months ago I had a double hip replacement done and, you know, in just three months after the surgery I was already out here in Boulder climbing the highest mountain here

that we have. The iconic mountain we have here, well, the big hikers, you know, do. And people got...you know, my doc say, "You are a miracle patient." I said to him, "Actually, when you really take care of yourself your body responds and collaborates, and it's there to support you, and that's exactly what happened."

Katie: Yeah, it's amazing. I hear so many similarities in our story just, I joke about it, but it's very serious as well. When I say if you wanna create autoimmune disease, just be really stressed, eat terrible food, don't sleep enough, which is pretty much what I did all through college and it's a great perfect storm for autoimmune disease. And for me, it was getting pregnant that kind of threw everything into upheaval. But I see so many of those same things and like you I had...I was sick a lot as a child and on antibiotics a ton. And some of my earliest memories were being like held down and tested for rheumatic fever and just all those things. So I think it's amazing how many similarities but also how much hope I think comes from both of our stories hopefully.

And I wanna go deeper on the hormones side now. So you mentioned in passing your own symptoms and I think maybe you would help to start broaden then narrow. So, let's delve into some of the symptoms that are commonly associated with some kind of hormone imbalance and like what someone may wanna look for.

Magdalena: Yeah, sure. That's a really good...that's a really important question. I know you've covered the thyroid a lot so I'm just gonna quickly run through the list. Exhaustion, you know, not the kind of like, "Oh, I'm tired." It's like kind of tired where you just cannot get yourself out of bed, right? Needing two cups of coffee to get you going. Putting on weight unexpectedly for no particular reason, even though you're eating the same food and your exercise regime is the same. Getting depressed, losing hair, feeling cold, right, infertility and miscarriages, are some of the very common thyroid symptoms. You know, let's talk about another one which I feel like a lot of women are dealing with and completely are unaware of that, and that's estrogen dominance.

Also, you know, known as low progesterone...it can be also include low progesterone. So you have things like, obviously infertility, miscarriage especially in the first trimester. But also, you know, things like terrible PMS which as women we have gotten to be so accustomed to. And I have to tell you that when you really rebalance your estrogen, progesterone, and how the estrogens get broken down, your PMS symptoms are gonna get significantly reduced. In fact, when, you know, when I have a good month with the PMS it's like the period comes and goes. And I know it's there but I can still function, you know, without having to take any painkillers or hide myself in my room for two days, right?

But also interestingly things like cellulite of, you know, lumps on the breasts which it drives me crazy how, you know, we go and see a doc and we are told that everything is fine. Just observe, your lumps, you know, as if they were gonna vanish miraculously. But also, you know, like lumps on the thyroid nodules are oftentimes fueled by estrogen. More serious stuff like fibroids, endometriosis, estrogen receptor positive breast cancers which a majority of breast cancers in the country is also fueled by estrogen. You know, so those are some of the things that are cellulite. I mean, if you just talk about this is something that drives so many women crazy, right, is having cellulite.

And the typical pear-shaped lady, you know, who's got that butt and the thighs, fat that just wouldn't go away, that's oftentimes because of estrogen dominance. So that's a big one. And when you're low in progesterone you can add on to this list of symptoms, also things like feeling anxious, having real problems falling asleep, something that a lot of women postpartum, right, will be suffering from. Progesterone doesn't come back up and we experience those. You know, then you're talking about another common hormone imbalances such as

polycystic ovarian syndrome, right? So what we have is high testosterone or a lot of time issues with sugar, metabolic stuff like insulin resistance or hypoglycemia or hyperglycemia will be in this category.

So, you know, symptoms will include things like of course having a cyst on the ovaries. But interestingly, a lot of women don't realize that having facial hair which is such a, you know, such a pain for so many women, right, and we do all these different cosmetic interventions to get rid of the hair on the mouth, where, you know, is actually is too high, too much of a testosterone in the women. As women we need testosterone but the issue here is balance. And when you have too much testosterone then that's when we start having facial hair, hair appearing on the chin but also now in nipples. Women even have it on their arms and back, really, really annoying. So, you know, so in a nutshell those are the, some of the... Oh, hair loss, let me not forget about like when you have frontal hair loss going on, this oftentimes also due to high testosterone.

Katie: That makes perfect sense. And I think that was a really great analysis but I think when you, like, start delving into it. I know for me when I was first trying to research hormone imbalance and my own thyroid problem, it seemed super overwhelming. And it seems like it's gonna be a very complex, super sciency, probably pharmaceutical approach. And that's what I love about your work and your book is that you bring it back to the food and you make it really simple. And so I'd love to jump into...you talk about certain, what you call power foods that can help bring those hormones back into balance. And I love my backgrounds in nutrition as well but I love starting with food because we all have to eat anyway. So you can just make room in your diet for those foods that are gonna help you in a certain way. So talk about some of what you call the power foods.

Magdalena: Yeah. So, you know, the power foods are...so the whole book was actually my whole process, my whole creative process of creating the book was identifying 20 super foods and then 20 super power herbs, spices, and medicinal mushrooms that have been proven to improve something about a woman's body that will directly or indirectly impact our hormones. And only then I developed all the recipes. So it wasn't like, you know, I had a whole bunch of recipes going like, "Oh, let's just dump it in the book." It was all recipes developed based on these 40 foods. So, you know, one of my absolute favorite go-tos are like the cruciferous vegetables, right?

So that will be things like our cauliflower and broccoli, and broccoli sprouts, and mizuna or arugula, which is my personal favorite. Kale of course, Brussels sprouts. And what's amazing about these foods is that the cruciferous vegetables that you can probably notice that all of them are from the cabbage families. And needless to say cabbage is also part of...in this family. And they are on the brassica family of veggies which contain a very powerful substance called DIM. Some of our listeners might be taking that as if in the form of a supplement, right, stands for Diindolylmethane. And what's beautiful about it is that DIM not only helps to bind estrogen and then evacuate it from our bodies but it also supports cell or liver detoxification pathways.

And, you know, when you talk about estrogen dominance, one of the key organs that's responsible for clearing a lot of the estrogens is the liver. So I know we didn't talk much about like what causes estrogen dominance and how does it happen, but let me just do a quick, like a note here so that our listeners can have a context. What's the big deal about a liver, like why detoxify us from estrogen? Estrogen, you know, let's not demonize estrogen in the first place, right? So when I talk about estrogen dominance it doesn't mean you have too much estrogen. The issue is you have too much of certain type of estrogen and the way you break down these estrogens into what we call metabolites, that's what's being harmful...harming you.

So, for example, you know, one of the estrogens the way it's broken down. The antagonistic or the harmful,

the carcinogenic if you will, metabolite of estrogen is what, for example, fuels the growth of, you know, lumps on your boobs or the nodules on your thyroid. So, the amazing thing about the body is that the liver is what breaks down...you know, we know that it breaks down like coffee and alcohol. And, you know, some people are aware that maybe yeast, and bacteria, and viruses get broken down and cleared out in the liver. But not many of us realize that the liver is the major detoxification organ for our hormones as well. And so, you know, going back to, just looping back to the cruciferous vegetables, just having three to four servings, so like three to four cups a day.

If you have a thyroid problem then, you know, just cook them lightly, just steaming it for three to four minutes is perfectly fine. It's gonna be, you know, totally safe for the thyroid, will do you so much good and just helping our estrogen so, so much. Maybe one more food I wanna mention that is huge is sulforaphane found in broccoli sprouts. You know, this is, I wanna just give you an example here of a food that can be put on the same pedestal with some of the most effective but yet harmful drugs that are used, for example, for breast cancers. Tamoxifen is a drug that's an estrogen blocker that's given to women who are with breast cancers. And, you know, as the name implies estrogen blockers, so it blocks the estrogen from coming into the cells and doing all that havoc.

The amazing thing is that just a cup of broccoli sprouts contains the same amount of sulforaphane as tamoxifen but needless to say, you know, broccoli sprouts are completely harmless. They are not gonna do anything harmful to you, only good stuff. And just, you know, tamoxifen, for example, you can only be on it for five to seven years because it's so harmful for the liver. Where here you have a cup of broccoli sprouts that you can add to your smoothie, soup, salads everyday and that have some...such a potent effect on, you know, fibrocystic breast. It's not only breast cancers, I'm just being extreme here as an example. But sulforaphane helps with anything that grows because of estrogen dominance, so all the fibroids, you know, endometriosis, thyroid nodules, a lot of that can be shrunk just by using a cup.

And if you're doing it as a preventative measure, then using a quarter of a cup of these lovely broccoli sprouts which, by the way, you can grow yourself at home. It doesn't have to be purchased in the supermarket, can be so incredibly medicinal.

Katie: I 100% agree. In fact, this is something I've done actually for years and I only wrote about it recently because it was one of those things that I just have always done and forgot that everybody else probably doesn't do. But like you said, the research is amazing on sulforaphane and that was one of the first things that my doctor, when I finally found a good doctor. It took me eight of them to find a great doctor who understood Hashimoto's. He immediately was able to diagnose like you, pretty severe Hashimoto's. And one of the first things he told me was eat broccoli sprouts every day. And I did the research to figure out why and it's drastic, like some of the studies are showing a 40% reduction in all cancers, like all the major cancers just from eating broccoli sprouts.

And one other trick that I found because there's sulforaphane and then there's I think it's called sulforaphane nitrile which potentially makes it a little harder to absorb sulforaphane. So Dr. Rhonda Patrick who I joke that I have a brain crush on, she's so brilliant. She recommends heating...like so putting the broccoli sprouts in warm water, that's about 157 degrees. You don't wanna get above that because you'll kill the sulforaphane. But under that, you kill the sulforaphane nitrile but not the sulforaphanes. You actually make it about three and a half times more bioavailable. So especially maybe someone who's trying to do it therapeutically versus those of us just trying to consume it daily for preventative measures. That can be a little trick to help increase the

bioavailability by 100%. I agree, it's super cheap to grow them at home. They're actually delicious and they're better than medication.

Magdalena: Absolutely. It just takes five days and if you have kids at home is just the kids see the seeds grow, you know, first start germinating and then sprouting, and then growing to like two, three inches. Two inches is what you want, right? I mean, it's just like a biology class in the kitchen.

Katie: Yeah, it's awesome. And I know you've talked about other seeds as well. So can you take us through some of the others? And I wanna make sure I'll mention it again at the end, but we have the URL from you, especially URL for listeners which is [wellnessmama.com/go/seedguide](https://www.wellnessmama.com/go/seedguide) that has a lot more in-depth of this. And like the whole system for helping balance hormones. But take us through some of the other seeds and how they impact that estrogen-progesterone ratio because I think that was another excellent point that you made. Estrogen in and of itself is not bad, and neither is testosterone or progesterone, but it's all about having the right amounts at the right time. So talk about how you use seeds to do that.

Magdalena: Absolutely. So the rock star of the seed rotation is flax seeds. And here I'm talking about golden flax seed that is a whole seed, not the pre-ground stuff. Now what's amazing about flax seed is that, number one, it contains, you know, lignans which are phytoestrogens, so naturally occurring estrogens. And, you know, just wanna emphasize this one more time, there's no need to be scared of estrogens, we need them. What's beautiful about flax seed is that we know today that how the estrogen metabolites gets broken down, flax seed helps us to steer them in a positive direction and not away from the bad, from the bad guys. And you know, Katie, a few years ago when I was diagnosed with estrogen dominance, I really had no idea what it was at that point.

And all I did at that time was just doing a couple of tablespoons of flax seed, freshly ground flax seed. And retested in just within two months, my estrogen dominance markers on those broken down metabolites have completely shifted towards the protective ones. So it was like a little experiment I did. I thought I'm not gonna do anything else, just that and see what happens and it really works. And then, you know, fast forward having worked with...I mean it was probably, I don't know, a thousand women have gone through the seed rotation method and this thing really works. So the idea is that in the first part of your cycle so from day one of your period, that's considered day one in the guide.

The first two weeks you basically wanna work on the first part of your cycle which is called the follicular phase. You wanna work on boosting up your estrogen levels and you can do that by incorporating two tablespoons of the combination of ground flax seed and pumpkin seeds, and that's gonna help with estrogen production. And then around your ovulation or somewhere around half of your cycle then you switch over to progesterone boosting seeds. And these would be sunflower seeds and sesame seeds. Sunflower seeds and sesame seeds are high in vitamin E and zinc which are great precursors for your body to produce its own progesterone. There is no progesterone found in any food, you know, unlike with estrogen like flax seed contains some.

There is no progesterone containing foods and so the only thing we can do is give our body sufficient nutrition for the corpus luteum to produce its own progesterone. And so, and that's that. And, you know, I will say when I first heard about this method, this naturopath told me about it because she says, "You know, that's what we are told in naturopathic school is to use the seed rotation to help women rebalance their estrogen and progesterone." When she told me that method I thought, "What? That's it?" You know, I thought there was something more invasive that will be required. And she said, "No, just try it." And I started trying it when I

was still in private practice and one woman after another started coming back and saying, "I cannot believe this but, you know, my period is back on. I have not had a period for three years. It's back on."

Women would say that their periods got regular, their PMS started improving. You know, older women started having their hot flushes going away, sleeping way better. I mean, the list of symptoms is just so long...I mean improvement is so long and encouraging that today that's one of the major tools that I'm using. So, like you said, there is a guide that explains exactly what to do with it and the guide also has recipes showing you how to use these seeds. What's really important is to use fresh seeds, organic as much as you can. Don't buy the pre-ground stuff because they lose their potency. But really a super effective tool, something totally worth trying. I will say, you know, about 5% of women who will try it, well, might have a paradoxical reaction to flax seeds.

So that's one of the interesting things about it is that, you know, the 95 women will respond beautifully and then there's this 5 who will be like, "You know I'm getting, actually my PMS is worse." And I'm not sure what that is attributed to but, you know, it's just something that we wanna honor about our bodies and listen and tune in. And say, "Well, you know, maybe it's just not for me." And one more thing I'll just say about the seed rotation is that, you know, just doing the seed rotation without making any other changes, you know, might give you some results but not like 100%. And so what I would really encourage our listeners is to, you know, embark on an anti-inflammatory diet, follow all the great stuff that you learn here on Katie's podcast.

Because all of that is gonna be so hugely anti-inflammatory and then the seed rotation is gonna just amplify the healing. I have come across women who, you know, are still living off gluten, living on coffee, bingeing on sugar. And, you know, and they do this, you do rotation and go like, "Well, it helps some but not entirely." Well, it's a...you know, it's like with supplements. You can take some but then if you are living a highly inflammatory life then the results are gonna be only, you know, that good.

Katie: Yeah, that's such an important point. And I think you also highlighted something really vital which is listening to your body. Like you said, 95% of people it works great but if you're the 5%, listen to your body and I guess they could just substitute in more pumpkin seeds versus flax seeds if that was an issue.

Magdalena: They can absolutely do that, yes, absolutely.

Katie: Yeah. And ever since I read that tip from you, actually in researching for this podcast a couple weeks ago. I have been doing that. I've always loved to make pesto and I've been making cilantro pesto like crazy because it's in season it's delicious right now. And I've realized you can easily sub out the nuts and so you can just put in whatever nuts you want in the pesto and you can actually put broccoli sprouts in there, too. And then like olive oil so it's kind of like this super anti-inflammatory but like really delicious pesto that goes on everything. So just a tip there, I've been obsessed with it and I love that you bring it down to such a simple food-based solution that's really nourishing for the body as well.

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hairspray, air fresheners are more. Filters out pollen and other allergens, pet dander and animal hair, mold spores and dust mites, cigarette and cigar smoke, and viruses, germs and bacteria. One of my favorite things about it is what they call auto mode where the fan speed basically adjusts to the appropriate level based on the current air condition in the home. It's been really fascinating to see in our house, for instance, the filters speed up when we've cooked food at high heat, or used cleaners that someone gave us that we thought were natural but they made the filters speed up. I know air filters can be pricey which is why I've teamed up with Air Doctor to get a massive discount for listeners. You can get 50% off right now by going to wellnessmama.com/go/air-doctor to get the discount. You can also find the link in the show notes at wellnessmama.fm

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Katie: So you've mentioned in passing kind of the different pillars and I love that you talked about the liver. I'd love to go a little deeper on that because I think a lot of us probably undervalue how important it is to support our liver and don't really understand ways to do that. But you talk about the pillars of hormone balance, being digestion, liver support, and sugar levels. So can you go a little more in-depth on how you see that and how women can support those three pillars?

Magdalena: Yeah. Yeah, sure. Just very much in a nutshell because, you know, I can talk about this stuff for like two hours with you, right? I use the analogy of a three-legged stool, which means that if you wanna sit comfortably on a three-legged stool, right, all the three legs need to be in a fairly firm and good position. And this is exactly what I have found with hormonal balance is that, yeah, you can...you know, you might be, for example, experiencing thyroid issues and be doing...playing around with different kind of medications and do this supplement and that supplement. But if your foundation, that three-legged stool is not in a very good place the results are gonna be always limited or short-term, or short-lived.

So this is where really the digestion, your sugar balance, liver health is so instrumental. And what I have found is that when women take care of those three things, a lot of the other things like, for example, you know, if somebody has got PCOS and doing, for example, cinnamon as, you know, an additional thing too for sugar balance control or, you know, whatever supplements that are blocking androgens and stuff like that, are not even necessary anymore because you've taken care of the foundation, things figure themselves out. The body just recalibrates itself and that's the beauty I have found of this, and the strength of this approach. So why is it a big deal?

You know, I talked about the liver clearing a lot of the hormones. What's the big deal about by our digestion? You know, a few things. First of all, when we have like a lot of digestive issues, like when you're constantly constipated, bloated, you have gas going on. Believe it or not that's considered very stressful for the body and, you know...and so there is a cortisol release. And so when you...if you're experiencing adrenal deficiency then you're just digging a deeper hole when you're having digestive issues. Number two, you know, they have fascinating research that's just coming out now and we're learning so much more about the microbiome, right? But there is a specific subset of bacteria in the gut we're now finding called the estrobolome which codes for enzymes that break down those estrogens.

So, Katie, who would have thought that, you know, in order to manage your fibrocystic breast or prevent breast cancer because it runs in the family, all you need to do is just bring in the good gut, you know, good bugs into your diet and take care of your gut bacteria, right? I mean we don't make these connections on a daily basis but that's what I found so, you know, so empowering when I was writing this book. Another thing that I just mentioned about digestion because that's one of my...it's a very painful point I find is that, you know, the gallbladder plays a huge role in creating...well, the gallbladder stores bile. And you might know that bile is used for us to emulsify fats. It's a little bit like a soap, right? If you wanna get fat or oil off your hands, you just use a soap, right?

So the bile is like the soap that emulsifies a fat. And guess what, that fat is used as a precursor for all your steroid hormones. So like all that estrogen, progesterone, testosterone, DHEA, they need fat, good quality fat that's metabolized, you know, as fuel, as food for them to be created. And so one of the crazy things about what I'm seeing happening is that we remove gallbladders. Doctors remove gallbladders so liberally that leaving so many women without gallbladders. And so we don't have that bile to step in and help us metabolize fats as effectively. You can live without a gallbladder, the question is what kind of quality of life? You have to be so careful with what you eat.

But more importantly, what I have found is that three to six months after a gallbladder has been removed, a lot of women start having issues with hormonal imbalances, and no one has ever told them to expect that. You know, they've been told that, you know, you're gonna...maybe you need to add some ox bile or whatever. But, you know, be careful with this food and that food, don't eat nuts and don't eat fatty foods or oil. But, you know, not the part about the consequences of leading to estrogen, like estrogen dominance is one of the key condition that happens after a gallbladder removal. And so many women have, you know, after removal would have been diagnosed with thyroid nodules and thyroid cancers, and the list goes on.

So it's something that I'm really passionate about so just to create the awareness that, you know, it's not like this body system is all connected with each other and we have to honor and respect that. And really work hard on maintaining them and not be so liberal in removing them which, you know, funny enough is always the men. Most of the time it's the men who are the doctors. They're like, "What? What hormonal imbalance? Gallbladder and hormonal imbalance, nothing to do with each other." So that's that. And, you know, and the sugar balance, I mean needless to say your, you know, insulin is a hormone. We don't realize that but it is produced in the pancreas and it is part of our whole hormonal balance. And it can be completely thrown off when you have blood sugar imbalances going on.

So, like for example, when you go into a state of hypoglycemia when you're feeling shaky, unfocused, in a very bad mood when you're hungry. That's a sign of hypoglycemia which not only does it exhaust your adrenals, it can throw your thyroid out of balance and it's just, you know, is a whole cascade of biochemical processes that

happens. So there you have it. You know, take care of those three legs of the stool and I can tell you that so many incredible...like so many annoying symptoms that we've been living with for years would just vanish.

Katie: Yeah. I think it's important to remember that. That the body naturally wants to move to a state of balance and health. And so if you support the body it will kind of naturally, in most cases, try to move in that direction. And I think that's what's the beauty of food. I know we're both biased there because that's our background but I think there's true wisdom there. And I'd love to go through a little bit more just kind of, if there's any more touch points you have for specific conditions, and then wrap up by talking a little bit more about this seed rotation guide so people can find that. But your own journey was with thyroid, so are there any other food-specific changes you would recommend someone make if they're dealing with the thyroid problem?

Magdalena: Yeah. So, you know, I would say the first thing to consider is the fact that when you have thyroid conditions, the first thing to consider is the fact that it's Hashimoto's disease most of the time which is an autoimmune disease. So, really, when you have Hashimoto's and it's not really the thyroid that needs the support directly but it's really your immune system, and that all of that starts and ends with the gut really. So I would say, you know, a big thing is I'm a big fan of doing a full and complete elimination diet and that's a big part of my book. And that's the reason why all the recipes in the book are free of gluten, dairy, soy, corn. They're also free of nitrate vegetables and are very low in sugar.

And I created that so that we create that sort of a very anti-inflammatory environment in our body through diet but also learn to incorporate like these amazing foods. And so, you know, I'm a big fan of obviously bone broths, but the bone broths, you know, that like that I have in the book also add special additional herbs. Like, for example, astragalus, which is a Chinese herb that helps to support the immune system. So a wonderful addition when you have Hashimoto's disease. You know, another thing I would say for Hashimoto's patients, a lot of women I find have very low stomach acid. And, you know, all the vitamins like B12 and iron, and magnesium, calcium, all of them are so important for us, so not just for the thyroid to function properly.

But even if you are like on thyroid medication, the conversion from T4 hormone to T3 has to happen when you have sufficient amount of D3 and zinc, you know, and iron, right? And the interesting thing is that so many women with autoimmune diseases have a low stomach acid. When you have a low stomach acid then you're not absorbing the maximum nutrients from the food, you know, you're eating but also from the supplements you are taking. So it's a little bit that all of that becomes a bit of an expensive P with mediocre results, right? Yeah, so you know, those are some of my absolute favorites. You were asking about Hashimoto's specifically, right?

Katie: Yeah, just, I feel like that's when I get quite a few questions about. So I love that you had some specific guidance just for that.

Magdalena: And, you know, also I mean the...let's not forget that the flax seed we talked about, that's an amazing addition as well because here is the connection...I mean all hormones are so hugely connected but let me just give you one example of the connection between estrogen dominance and thyroid. Estrogen dominance causes the decrease of the thyroid binding...sorry, the increase of thyroid binding globulin. Which means that the globulin becomes so high that it binds too much of the thyroid and then you don't have sufficient thyroid. So even if you're taking thyroid medication or if your thyroid is just producing its own thyroid medication, the thyroid the hormone, when you have estrogen dominance a lot of that thyroid

hormone gets bound and not much of it is available for your cells to utilize.

So, again, this is where flax seed, you know, indirectly comes in as super helpful, and not to mention the fact that, you know, when you're doing just two tablespoons of these seeds every day you're also bringing in this amazing quality of fiber. And, you know, and constipation is one of the things you do not want to have when you have any form of hormone imbalance, including Hashimoto's. Because bowels that are not moving, all of these toxins re-enter the bloodstream through the colon, right, because they have to go somewhere. And so, you know, who would have thought, right, that having a really good bowel movement will be super helpful for balancing your hormones. And I love flax seed for that because it's like the insoluble fiber and it sweeps the colon like a sweep. You know, it actually sweeps the colon and so you evacuate much better that way.

Katie: Such good advice. And another one that I get questions about quite a lot. I'm gonna kind of lump them together but we talked a little bit about PCOS and estrogen dominance and the connection there. Are there any other specific pieces of advice for someone who is struggling with either of those?

Magdalena: Yeah. So that's another thing that happens is yeah, absolutely. So what...you know, PCOS the first thing we really wanna take care is rebalance our sugar levels. That's something that I have found to be incredibly effective. And, you know, and just the little back story here is that when you have high blood sugar levels, basically what happens is the sex binding globulin goes up. And, again, it binds up a lot of the...sorry, it goes down and so what happens is you got too much testosterone floating around in your blood and that's what causes a lot of the side effects that the symptoms we talked about like facial hair and it causes the growth of the cyst in the ovaries.

So, you know, one of the...my absolute favorite things to do is to start off with a really solid breakfast that does not include things like a muffin and a cup of coffee. First thing in the morning you can have that but maybe later in the day. Really start off with what I call the PFF kind of breakfast, protein, fat, and fiber-rich breakfast. You know, Katie, you probably picked it up from my intro and we talked about that before that I grew up around the world. Actually, I lived in seven different countries, I've traveled to over 40 different countries. And one of the big things I've realized on my travels whenever I go to, you know, what we like to call developing countries, meaning those ones that have not been that affected yet by western way of eating.

Everybody eats a truly savory breakfast. So whether you go to Ethiopia or you go Peru or...but even, you know, countries like Japan or China for that matter, right, which are developed countries. It's always savory food that's served for breakfast, never sugary desserts the way we start off the day. And that's gonna make one of the biggest and most profound differences in your day when you have like, you know, a breakfast. Just to give you an example here of a recipe, one of the most popular recipes in my community is called the Farmer's Wife's Breakfast. And really what it is, is a bed of greens such as arugula, mizuna, or you know, or steamed, any cruciferous vegetables could be a great start.

So you start off with a bed of greens and then adding on, you know, half an avocado, right, so you're getting the fats in. Have a piece of protein, it could be from the night before. I'll make a batch of like lamb patties that are...they come with fennel seeds and cumin, wonderful spices for improving digestion. And maybe on the side have a bit of sour kraut as well, right? So bring in those probiotics that we talked about that's gonna help you with estrogen dominance. And so a breakfast like that is a bit of a reframe especially if somebody is used to doing, you know, cereals and milk for breakfast. But, you know, your body's gonna respond to it so beautifully. And I cannot tell you what a hit it has been always with my community women who changed to

this kind of a breakfast experience.

First of all, no crashes at 11:00, no sugar, you know, dips and where you need coffee or sugar to pick me up, right, or a piece of muffin. Energy is so much more stable throughout...distributed throughout the day. You are not hungry until lunch, and sometimes even beyond. And the most fascinating thing is that a lot of women also experience significantly better sleep. So what I have found is that when you change your breakfast this way your desire for processed carbohydrates and, you know, and sugar, right, is significantly reduced because you do not have those sugar dips anymore. So, a really powerful tool.

Katie: Yeah, such good advice and I have...and the same way with you. I definitely do a savory breakfast and my kids do, too. They've learned how to make it. And once you make the switch it's so easy. We just do a huge skillet of like all kinds of different vegetables and some kind of protein in there, and olive oil, and avocado on top. And usually like that pesto because I'm obsessed with pesto especially in the spring. But really, you don't miss it once you make the switch and you're so much more satisfied the whole day than just cereal. Another one that I don't know if you have delved specifically into this, but I'm sure you probably have some advice is for people with postpartum depression, and from a lot of moms who are struggling through that. And I'm curious if you have anything that might help them specifically.

Magdalena: Yeah. So that's a really good...that's such an important question, right? Yeah. So, postpartum a lot of the times is a combination of things. It can be low progesterone, so you're having very high progesterone while having a baby. And then your progesterone is gonna drop very quickly upon delivery. And for a lot of women that progesterone doesn't come back up that quickly, right? So that's the first option. The second possibility is that is a thyroid issue. So if it's a thyroid, and as you know, a lot of women are having...develop Hashimoto's within six months to one year after postpartum, right? And that's a lot to do with the hormones dropping and the shock to the body, right?

So when it comes to low progesterone I would say that doing the protocol for the seed rotation. Or anything, if you just look at foods that are high in vitamin E and zinc is super helpful. You know, I know that oysters is not a favorite thing for everyone but they do contain zinc. And you especially wanna fix it having zinc and adding those, the sesame seeds and sunflower seeds ground can be just a wonderful addition. Overall, you know, one of the things is that is having a really anti-inflammatory diet. So, getting rid of all the food triggers which will be a lot of the times your comfort foods, right? The glutes and dairies, and reducing sugar as much as possible will be, you know, what I have seen really gives a lot of improvement right away.

Katie: Awesome. I'm a fan. I probably won't ever have postpartum depression in that case because I love oysters. I will eat them daily. But as we get toward the end, I'd love to...can you just walk us through, you have a seed rotation guide that you're giving to the listeners and again that link is wellnessmama.com/go/seedguide and the link will also be in the show notes at wellnessmama.fm. But explain what that is and so people can find that and kind of get started right away.

Magdalena: Yeah. So the seed rotation guide shows you how to get started with the seeds, from the first part of your cycle. So day one of your periods, where we wanna boost the estrogen levels. And then around your ovulation which is mid-cycle, you switch over to the estrogen boosting seeds...sorry, progesterone boosting seeds which is sesame seeds and sunflower seeds. That's basically the premise of it. And, you know, for somebody who's got, let's say very irregular periods, just start off on day one when you get your period even with just spotting. Treat that as the first day of your period and start off with the estrogen-boosting seeds,

which is your flax seed and pumpkin seeds.

And, you know, and over time, I mean I have found that when you do the cycling of seeds for about two to three months, significant improvements happen. A lot of times women ask, "Should I do this forever?" It really depends on your body. You know, for some women, the body recalibrates itself and that's not necessary. And others will probably benefit a lot, maybe not every day, but every other day doing the seed could just take away a lot of the symptoms right away.

Katie: Wonderful. This has been so much fun. I think I could talk to you all day and I know that you've probably helped a lot of women who are listening today. And I think you're busy as well so thank you for your time and being here and for sharing your wisdom. And, of course, there will also be links so that everyone can find you, but your book is "Cooking for Hormone Balance," and that's available everywhere books are sold. So if you wanna learn more and you're listening, go find it on Amazon or any bookstore should have it. Magdalena, thank you so much for being here.

Magdalena: Thank you. And, Katie, you are phenomenal. Thank you so much.

Katie: Oh, thank you. And thanks to all of you for listening and I hope to see you next time on "The Healthy Moms Podcast."

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