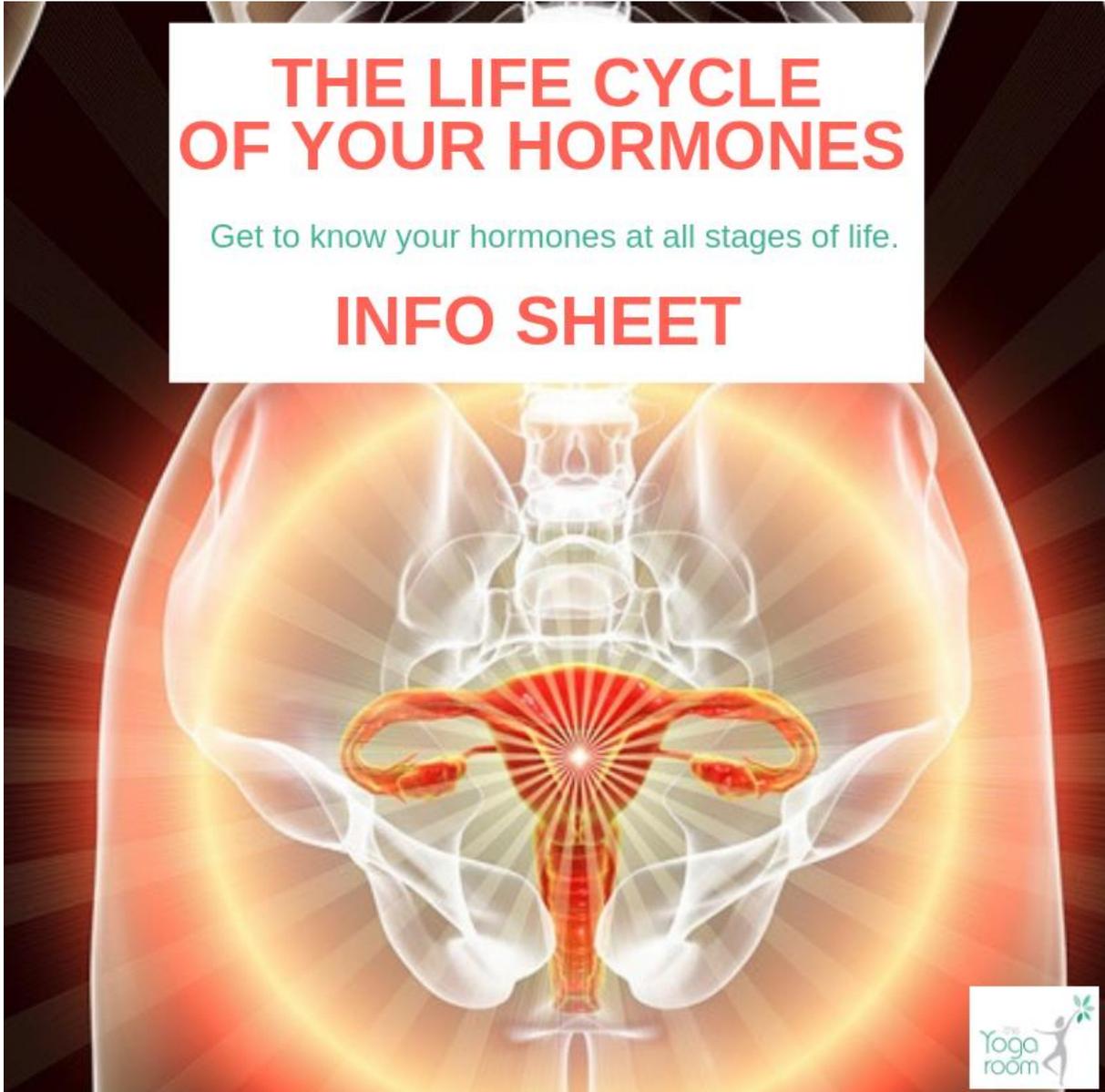


# THE LIFE CYCLE OF YOUR HORMONES

Get to know your hormones at all stages of life.

## INFO SHEET



Jacqueline Rose - The Yoga Room

[theyogaroom120@gmail.com](mailto:theyogaroom120@gmail.com)

<https://www.theyogaroom120.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/theyogaroom120>

<https://www.instagram.com/theyogaroom120>

<https://theyogaroom2017.wordpress.com/>

## The only thing constant in a woman's life is CHANGE!

Women's lives are a function of our hormones.

This is not something to be embarrassed or ashamed about.

Being a 'hormonal woman' should not be an insult!

Our hormones allow us to step into our unique femininity, sexuality and power.

The problems, challenges and struggles arise when women don't understand their hormonal cycles, how they naturally change over the short and long term and how they affect and impact you.

The challenge for every woman is to find balance and stability in your regular life whilst your hormones are constantly and naturally fluctuating.

In *The Lifecycle of Your Hormones Info Sheet*, I share with you information about your dominant hormones, how they impact you physically and emotionally and how they change over your lifecycle. As you become aware of your hormones, understand how they affect you and pay attention to what hormones are at play at different times, you will strengthen your body-mind connection and start adapting your lifestyle to your hormonal cycle, to live your fullest life.

For each lifecycle stage I add a *Yoga Tip* which focuses on the type of yoga practice that can help navigate this stage of life.

## Teenage Years/Puberty – Start of the Cycle

As young girls enter puberty, your hormonal/endocrine systems begins to wake up and the female hormones that will accompany you throughout the rest of your life start to be stimulated.

At the beginning of puberty, the brain releases a hormone called gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH). GnRH triggers the pituitary glands (the glands responsible for production of some major hormones) to secrete follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) and luteinizing hormone (LH) into the bloodstream. These two hormones - FSH and LH – are critical to reproduction, as they instruct the ovaries to begin producing estrogen and prepare for ovulation.

Once ovulation starts, progesterone gets produced, whose function is to prepare the uterus for potential pregnancy.

During early teenage years all these hormones (and some others too, like testosterone and cortisol) are all trying to get into balance. They are naturally fluctuating, their levels not yet reaching optimum balance. This results in a range of physical, emotional and mental health challenges, some of which can severely affect daily functioning.

This is a turbulent time for girls, with most not really understanding what is going on in their bodies, how to deal with it and when it will end. The lack of information and clear advice creates even more stress and anxiety in girls. Suffering with puberty symptoms especially PMS, social angst, trying to find your own identify and discover who you are, while trying to fit in, all add to the emotional turmoil going on during these years.

**Yoga Tip:** Practice should focus on balancing hormonal fluctuations, reducing anxiety of the changes going on and developing a strong self-identity.

## **Fertile Years – Creating Balance and Stability.**

As a girl comes out of her teenage years and matures into her 20s and 30s, her hormonal system tends to settle down into a regular menstrual cycle of between 29 - 35 days. Even within a normal, predictable and balanced hormonal/menstrual cycle, your hormone levels fluctuate over the course of the month.

At this stage the four key female hormones (estrogen, progesterone, FSH, LH) have been established but affect you on a physical and emotional level. Without understanding the impact of each hormone on you, it can feel like you are suffering from unpredictable mood swings and unexplained, fluctuating physical symptoms.

Some days you will feel as if you can conquer the world (that's the estrogen talking) and some days you will just want to stay in bed all day (hello progesterone). By understanding what hormones are dominant at the four main stages of your menstrual cycle and how they affect you, you begin to get control over what is happening in your body.

### **Menstrual cycle hormones and their emotional implications.**

*Period Days:* FSH is dominant. During these days you feel very connected to yourself, introspective and more selfish. It's ME time.

*Post-period Days:* Estrogen rises. This is the feel-good hormone, everything is amazing, you feel great and can conquer the world!

*Ovulation:* Progesterone begins to increase. Progesterone is a very emotional hormone. It triggers emotional fluctuations, mood swings, feeling more sensitive, and it allows you to be more attentive to details.

In the days after ovulation, as progesterone increases, you are focused on yourself, your internal dialogue and self-analysis. This creates feelings of instability and being out of balance.

*Post-ovulation:* Progesterone fluctuation – if there is NO conception and pregnancy does not develop, then progesterone and estrogen will both fall, creating more emotional instability and uncertainty.

This 'normal' cycle is often interrupted during the fertile years by pregnancy, miscarriage, fertility treatment and other lifestyle choices. All these events impact the balanced hormonal cycle with profound physical, emotional and mental health implications.

**Yoga Tip:** Each stage of the menstrual cycle requires it's own yoga practice to manage and balance the physical and emotional experiences of that stage.

## Perimenopause Journey - Things change again

Just when you think you understand your body and its cyclical flow, you enter your 40s and things change again. From about 45 years of age (it can be earlier in some women), you feel like you have reverted back to your puberty years as you experience physical and emotional turmoil. Your periods become irregular and there is no predictability in your cycle. This is because your hormonal system is in major fluctuation, preparing for menopause and the post-menopause stage.

During the perimenopause stage (the years leading up to menopause) – which can last anywhere between seven and 13 years - women can experience a variety of symptoms to varying degrees, as your hormones try to establish their new normal levels. The body can go through major physical, emotional and mental health changes as a result of fluctuating hormonal levels, which can significantly impact daily life.

Estrogen levels decline during perimenopause, but they do so in an irregular fashion. Sometimes there can be more estrogen present during perimenopause than in the past. This is one of the main causes of many of the physical symptoms experienced during perimenopause, such as irregular periods, hot flashes, vaginal dryness and reduced libido.

What exacerbates the problem is that many women feel very frustrated from a lack of helpful information as to what is happening to them.

In addition, most women don't expect menopausal symptoms before the age of 50, and don't understand what is happening in their bodies. In addition, because there is such a variety of physical, emotional and mental health symptoms, there is not enough awareness and understanding about what to expect, what is within normal range and how to help yourself other than resorting to HRT (hormone replacement therapy).

**Yoga Tip:** Regular and consistent yoga practice during this time helps to balance fluctuating hormones and deal with many of the physical symptoms. Yoga Nishit also gives you the space to understand the emotional changes and accept them with gratitude.

## Menopause – Step into your Truest Self.

Once you are confirmed to be in menopause (through a blood test and 12 months since the date of your last period) your hormone levels balance out to the levels they will maintain for the next stage of your life.

FSH becomes the dominant hormone now and remains pretty stable over the coming years. Progesterone has pretty much disappeared and estrogen is produced at very low, but stable levels by the adrenal glands instead of the ovaries.

FSH has a profound emotional effect on women. It changes the way you experience life, your surroundings and how you relate to situations. FSH is about being selfish, focusing on yourself, exploring and discovering the truest essence of who you are.

The journey of self-analysis, awareness and connection that happens during post-menopause can be a volatile one if you are not given the tools, framework and guidance to navigate this time. It can lead to major life changes and shifts if you are not prepared for it.

**Yoga Tip:** Strong dynamic yoga, building strong body-mind connection, tapping into your most authentic self.

## DISCLAIMER

The contents of this cheat sheet are for informational purposes only, and are not a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.

Seek advice from a medical professional or qualified health care provider before you start yoga practice.

Make sure you seek advice from a medical professional or qualified health care provider with any questions you have about any persistent medical conditions.

All information is recommendation only. Results will vary for each woman.

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