



CENTRE FOR WELLNESS

WELLNESS NEWS ~ SPRING 2017

<p>1 THE SECOND HALF</p>	<p>3 YOUR HEALTHY PLATE - recipe p.5</p>
<p>6 SUPPORT NOT SYMPATHY</p>	<p>8 THE GREAT MASQUERADER</p>

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The Second Half: the importance of the luteal phase for fertility

by Allison Ziegler N.D.

One of the beauties of a woman's body is the extraordinary gift to be able to bear life. Because of this gift, many women feel the strong desire to become a mother. It can be physically, mentally and emotionally taxing in the process of trying to conceive. Understanding the complexities of fertility can seem overwhelming, especially to those who have been trying to conceive for some time. The luteal phase of a woman's menstrual cycle is one area that must be understood in order to determine if pregnancy can happen and can shed insight into the hormonal status of the body.

The menstrual cycle is divided into two phases, the follicular and luteal phases. The follicular phase is the first half of the menstrual cycle and is primarily dominated by the hormone estrogen. The rise in estrogen is responsible for building up the lining of the uterus (endometrium). The second half of the cycle is called the luteal phase. It begins at ovulation and continues to the start of menstrual flow. Progesterone significantly rises during the luteal phase, which helps to maintain the endometrial lining for implantation if fertilization takes place. If fertilization does not result, progesterone gradually declines a few days before flow to allow the uterine lining to shed in menstruation.

A normal menstrual cycle is between 21-35 days. The length of a woman's luteal phase (ovulation to start of flow) is usually the same number of days each month. The follicular phase can vary in the amount of days and is what contributes to the varying number of days in the cycle length each month. The length of the luteal phase is crucial for fertility. The luteal phase must be at least 10 days in length-optimal being 12-14 days. If it is less than 10 days, pregnancy is unlikely to happen. Since progesterone is responsible for maintaining the lining of the uterus, a short luteal phase indicates low progesterone levels.

Progesterone is a very important hormone with respect to fertility. In fact, it increases by 1400% from baseline levels in the luteal phase (NiNielsen HK J Clin Endocr Metab 1990;70:1431). This huge increase in the second half of the cycle is required in order to maintain the uterine lining and create an environment where implantation can occur. The high levels of progesterone also help to maintain the pregnancy once implantation occurs. If progesterone levels are too low, miscarriage can happen. Thus, the length of the luteal phase can help predict if pregnancy can occur based on progesterone levels.

Measuring the Luteal Phase

One of the best ways to determine the length of the luteal phase is to record Basal Body Temperature (BBT) over 3 cycles. BBT is the lowest body temperature attained when the body is at rest, usually during sleep. BBT should be measured with a basal body thermometer under the tongue immediately upon waking before getting out of bed. Begin on day 1 of the menstrual cycle (first day of menstrual flow) and continue recording throughout the entire cycle. During the first half of the cycle, first day of flow to ovulation, the BBT will be lower. Once ovulation has occurred, the BBT will increase by 0.25-0.5 degrees Celsius and will remain high until menstruation starts (see Figure 1). Recording the BBT over 3 cycles can show the average length of the entire menstrual cycle including the number of days of the luteal phase (number of days the temperature is elevated).

The BBT technique also allows one to determine if ovulation in fact occurred. If there is no rise in temperature in the second half of the cycle, it is unlikely ovulation has occurred.

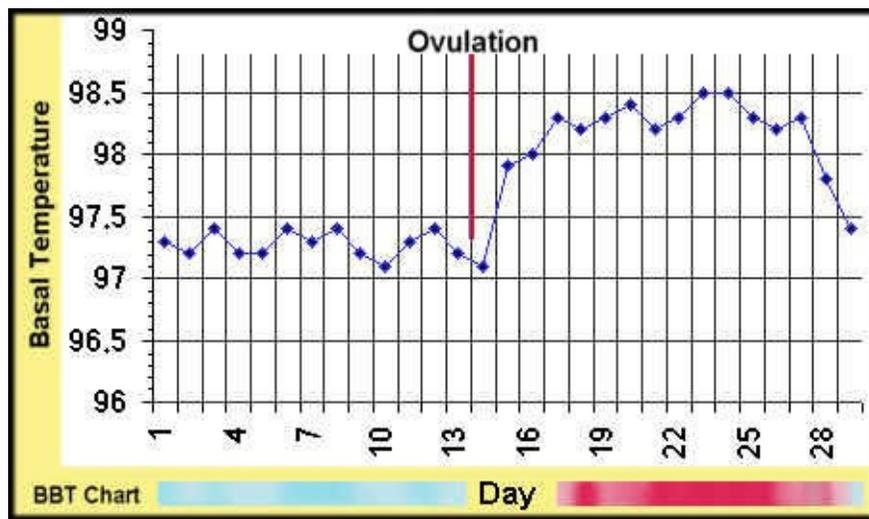


Figure 1: Normal Luteal Phase

Improving Luteal Phase

A short luteal phase can be improved by increasing progesterone levels.

- Vitamin B6 is required in the production of progesterone. Supplementing and eating foods rich in B6 such as bananas, salmon, tuna, hazelnuts, spinach, sweet potato, turkey, chicken and garlic, can help correct progesterone levels.
- Vitex is a herb that helps to increase progesterone.
- Omega-3 fatty acids provide the building blocks for hormonal production.
- Prescription bio identical progesterone cream or oral progesterone taken in the second half of the cycle if progesterone is quite low.
- Liver detox to support proper estrogen and progesterone hormone detox and balance.
- Avoid plastics, pesticides and chemicals.
- Regular exercise

The luteal phase length and the hormones involved are important factors for conception. Having a more in depth understanding of the very cycle that allows a woman to be able to carry a new life is key in determining fertility!

Your healthy
plate



Your healthy plate

by Julie Zepp Rutledge N.D.

I have a couple of free facebook groups that I use on occasion to post health related info & recipes, to share events and engage various challenges. A couple of months ago we did a Mindful Clean Eating Challenge and this is one of my follow up posts from that initiative. I decided to share it here to show that clean eating doesn't have to be

cumbersome and difficult. If you would like to join this group search Your Best You on Facebook and request to join!

I often hear people claim that "there is nothing to eat!" when we take away refined foods or breads or a reliance on animal proteins. Or that it takes more effort and planning or is more expensive.

However I want to assure you that it is possible! If it weren't I wouldn't be doing it, at least most of the time. There is the planning to ensure that you have enough ripe produce for the week. And the effort it will take to wash and prepare it, however honestly it can end there for difficulty.

Often my meals are fast and easy, really life doesn't allow me, with the choices I make, to cook fancy meals from a recipe every day. Breakfasts are often smoothies packed full of goodness. Or if I am looking for something warm some cooked kasha (toasted buckwheat) that I make in big batches, 1.5-2 cups dry at a time to make 3-4 cups cooked. We reheat this drizzle on some flax oil, sprinkle on the cinnamon and a pinch of sea salt and it is delicious and nutritious. For me I add raw walnuts as well and for the kids I often scoop in a generous spoon of almond butter for some added protein and good fats.

Usually once a week I have a carcass in the slow cooker for about 36-48 hours on a low simmer making broth. On a Sunday afternoon (or whenever I have an extra hour or two) I will drain the broth from the bones and make up a big pot of some sort of soup to be used for lunches for the week. Suppers are a throw together sort of idea, depending on how much time I have.

For a starch (1/4 of your plate) I might lightly fry some plantain in coconut oil, or if I have more time roast some beets or squash in a roasting pan in coconut oil in the oven. Sprinkle with a combo of salt and pepper, some paprika, any dried herbs prior to roasting and they are so good. Quinoa cooks up in about 15 minutes, rices a little longer so take that into consideration when choosing your starch.

Other non-starchy vegetables will make up about 1/2 of your plate.

Salads might be a few handfuls of mixed greens, or chopped romaine. Sometimes with added veggies like cukes, tomatoes, chopped pepper, sometimes not. Drizzled with flax oil or a homemade salad dressing, topped with a few walnuts or pumpkin seeds.

I generally also try to steam up a veggie - usually something more "bland" as the kids prefer their veggies this way - like broccoli, carrots or peas.

To make them a little more fun even a drizzle of a good quality oil (my fave is flax) and a pinch of sea salt does wonders. Top your veggies and grains with healthy oils - hemp and flax oils, chopped avocado, a Tbsp or two of nuts or seeds.

I am currently exploring more vegan eating so my protein (1/4 of your plate) might be some hummus, cooked beans, falafel (little chickpea burgers), tofu, tempeh or a veggie burger.

My son has liked tofu since he was little and I think his little constitution is much like mine and can thrive quite readily exclusively on plant-based proteins.

My husband and daughter on the other hand are definite omnivores, and I don't know I would trust being around them too long without them having a good feast of chicken or beef. For quick protein sources for meat eaters, I have lots of yummy go-to recipes in the following cookbooks: Delicious Detox, Whole Life Nutrition, Nourishing Meals, Quinoa 365. Do yourself a favor and pick 3 or 4 faves and use those in a pinch. When you make burgers or veggie burgers freeze extra so you can pull them out when short on time.

Have ground chicken on hand, it thaws fast and is easily cooked up for sauces or even just used as a crumble in a salad, stuffed into a wrap or stirred into some squash.

So, yes, I do cook different meals for myself and my family and it is a choice I make and I don't mind it one bit. Sometimes I have people who are concerned that they have to make more than one meal for their family and this can seem quite daunting or "wrong" for some reason. I want to assure you that if this is something you need to do in order to be healthy, then do it! Don't wait around for your family to want to do the same crazy things you are doing.

Just do it! for you! Maybe they will come around, maybe they won't. Take care of yourself and lead by example.

In the Healthy Plate photo I added fruit as a side, great for snacks and in smoothies or topping a bowl of breakfast oats. Choose pure water and herbal teas as your main beverage options.

The more you follow a clean and balanced diet like this the more you will find your energy levels increase, your weight stabilize, your skin glow and your health issues gradually reverse.

You are worth the effort!

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YOUR BEST YOU

*I have found that if you love life,
life will love you back.*

- Arthur Rubinstein

Dr. Giulio Zepp
Inspired Health



Blackberry Cherry “Parfait”

Serves: 1.

Author/ creator: Kaylee Woolhether from Health Starts Today.

An easy and delicious breakfast, dessert, or snack! Pairing fibrous chia seeds with our fruit smoothie helps regulate blood-sugar levels and adds protein content. Expect to feel fully satiated after this treat!

Ingredients:

Bottom layer:

1 tbsp chia seeds

½ cup water

Top layer:

½ cup blackberries (frozen)

½ cup cherries (frozen)

¼ almond mylk (or more, as needed)



Preparation:

In a glass, mix water and chia seeds together well. Let sit in the fridge overnight or for at least an hour. This will form the bottom layer, a “chia pudding”.

To create the top layer, place frozen blackberries and cherries, and almond mylk into a high powered blender. If your blender has a tamper this will come in handy.

The idea is for this layer to be very thick, so you can eat it with a spoon. However, you can mix in more almond mylk, if needed, for the fruits to blend properly.

Pour the thick smoothie creation on top of your chia seed pudding, and garnish with fruit, nuts, or seeds of your choice for some aesthetic fun! I used dragonfruit.

Enjoy!

For more recipes & nutrition fun,
check out
www.healthstartstoday.com!



Support not sympathy

By Laura Stark N.D.

Don't be the rain cloud over anyone's healing parade.

People dealing with chronic disease like cancer need every resource at their disposal – physically, emotionally and mentally, the serious work of healing can be utterly exhausting, and your sympathy is not helpful! If you have some energy to spare, please offer it in the form of support instead. Let me explain.

Imagine that you just received news that a dear friend has been diagnosed with cancer. What are your first thoughts? What are you feeling? Even without any further details with that news, many people will be devastated. Some will have already entered into the stages of grieving the loss of their dear friend.

The word cancer is enough to do that. We all carry assumptions, but those that become charged with emotions like fear increase in their power and influence. What are some of our societal assumptions about cancer? Cancer is a horrendous disease that leads to a slow and painful death. Cancer is a death sentence. Cancer is incurable and the treatment can be worse than the disease. Cancer means inevitable suffering. Basically, you get cancer, it will only get worse until it will eventually kill you.

But none of these statements is actually true. These are all simply beliefs about cancer that may be true in the context of someone's subjective experience, but alter the mindset and all of these beliefs can be turned on their heads.

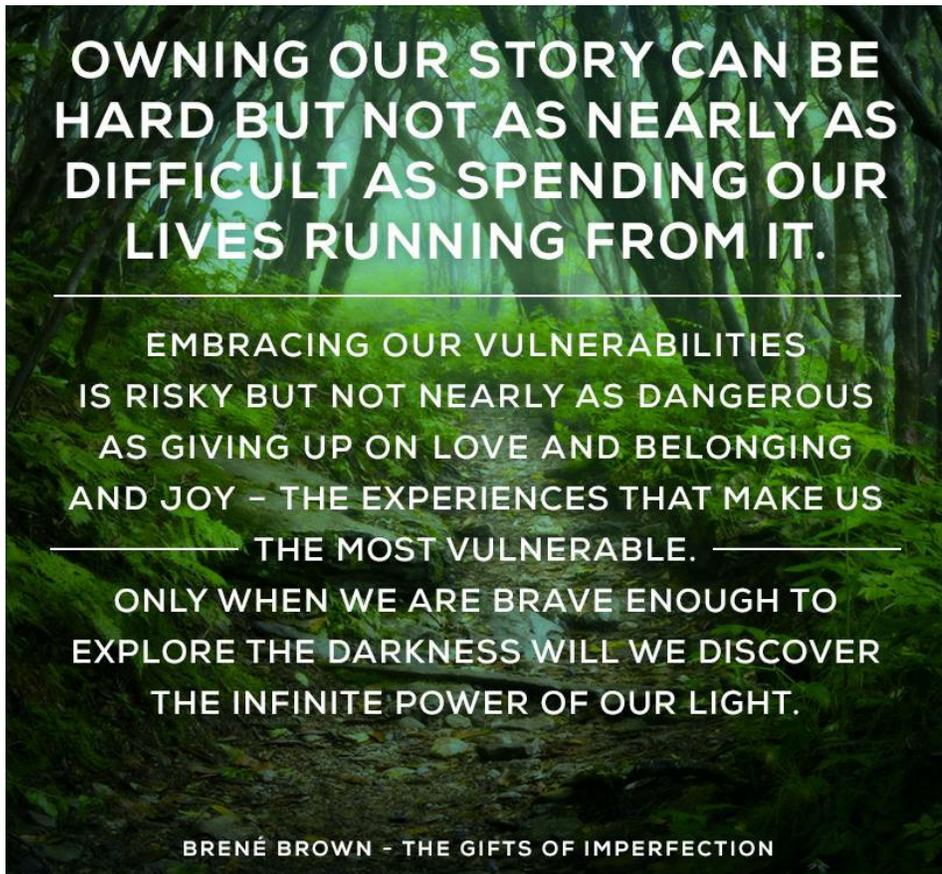
False beliefs like this serve us very poorly because what dominates in our thoughts tends to also dominate our lives. If you believe cancer is inevitable suffering, for you, it is sure to be. You're probably thinking, "But Laura, cancer really is a horrendous disease!" Don't worry, I'm not denying reality here. I have a healthy respect for cancer, but I do not fear it. I understand it as a biological process with a purpose in the body just like every other disease. With my medical knowledge rather than an emotionally charged belief as my foundation, my reaction to cancer is to ask questions, problem solve and take practical actions to help the body out. That option feels a lot calmer and less catastrophizing, doesn't it?

Now, not everyone has the medical training and clinical experience to build that trust and confidence in the human healing machine (aka body), but we can all check our assumptions and choose to act from only those that serve us (or those around us) well.

Let's take this discussion back to the cancer patient whose personal resources are tapped to the max. You hear their news and showing your sympathy would be the kind caring thing to do, right? Wrong. Your sadness for them, based on those beliefs we just talked about does nothing but reinforce those false beliefs! Worrying about someone does nothing but bombard them with that negative energy and to a person who needs all their resources for other work, holding up a strong boundary to protect themselves from what other people are thinking or saying about them can be just too much work.

So, what if, instead, you could respond from a more realistic assumption about cancer? Such as, "Wow, my friend probably wants to survive this – I can only imagine it will be a challenging and totally life changing journey!" No more fatalistic thinking, right? From an emotional space like this, you can offer that friend hope, encouragement, and hold onto that little piece of faith for them – something they need to keep in a positive mindset but may have a hard time doing for themselves all the time.

So, instead of sympathizing with someone else's pain, seek to help elevate them – hold them in a vision of the best possible outcome. That will feel helpful.





The Great Masquerader: An Introduction to Small Intestine Bacterial Overgrowth

By Marika Geis N.D.

Dr. Nigel Plummer, one of the leading researchers in the field of probiotic development, once said that antibiotic resistance begins with the first dose of the first antibiotic ever given in one's life. He has also made the claim that without the presence of the human microbiome we would perish by the time we were 5 years of age.

Consider this: we have about 1.5 kg of bacteria in and on our bodies. Our microbiome contains 10 times the number and 200 times the genetic diversity of our own cells. One might say that we exist because of our microbiome, not in spite of it. Now consider this: by the time a person is 20 years of age, they will have taken approximately seventeen antibiotic prescriptions. When we look at how we live, the stresses we endure, the food we eat, the drugs we take and the environment in which we live, it seems as though we operate as 'separate' from this living, breathing presence and not an integral part of it. Where has it gotten us?

Never before have we seen this level of autoimmunity, irritable bowel syndrome/inflammatory bowel disease, infertility, behavioral and cognitive dysfunction, mood disorders, cancers (particularly in our little ones), and skin disease. We are the best fed, most poorly nourished and sickest cohort in history. How did we get so lost? The interplay between all the various factors is complex, however the notion that our microbiome is at the epicenter of many chronic diseases is slowly but surely gaining traction in the medical literature. A quick look into some of the research on these conditions reveals that this is where cutting edge research is taking place. Strategies aimed at manipulating and optimising our gut flora are yielding unprecedented results both in terms of treatment and prevention. On their face, conditions like diabetes, mood disorders, and allergies wouldn't readily bring a clinician to consider our microbiome as being the source of the condition. We have so many effective strategies to manage these issues that it's easy to forget the impact that gut bacteria have creating the disorder itself. This is an important concept to consider especially when, despite doing all the right things, symptoms don't get any better or alternatively, that things improve but it requires heavy reliance on medications (both pharmaceutical and natural) in order to maintain function.

What I'd like to propose is this: Could the source of our troubles be a matter of "Small Intestine Bacterial Overgrowth"? Could manipulating our gut flora free us from the limitations imposed by chronic disease?

In short, Small Intestine Bacterial Overgrowth or SIBO can be defined as an increase in the number of bacteria, and/or changes in the types of bacteria present in the small intestine.

In most patients, SIBO is not caused by a single type of bacteria, but is an overgrowth of the various types of bacteria that should normally be found in the colon. Less commonly, SIBO results from an increase in the otherwise normal bacteria of the small bowel. Considering that the diversity in the small intestine is low compared to that of the large intestine and that pharmaceutical antibiotics wipe out 99.9% of the flora of the upper gastrointestinal tract, it comes as no surprise that using antibiotics is one of the major risk factors for developing this condition.

Add to it the chronic use of proton pump inhibitors (for reflux), oral contraceptives, food poisoning, endometriosis, surgeries to the digestive tract (think: appendix, gall bladder removal or gastric resections), chronic constipation, long standing Celiac disease or Crohn's and you'll soon realize that this disorder has the potential to effect all of us to some degree. SIBO is even implicated in cases of cystic fibrosis, a hereditary and fatal disease affecting the lungs. When would you suspect SIBO? The list of symptoms and associated conditions are VAST! But here's a few to ponder:

- Gas, bloating, abdominal discomfort, belching, nausea, constipation and/or diarrhea that does NOT improve when addressing food sensitivities or liver dysfunction
- Chronic headaches, joint pain, muscle pain, fatigue, skin lesions, respiratory conditions, mood or cognitive concerns (again: that does NOT improve with your current program)
- food sensitivities (chicken/egg, I know)
- weight loss/gain, fat in your stool, anemia (iron or B12)

Luckily testing is easy and straightforward. If positive, embarking on a program can be challenging but is often the most rewarding. So now, look up SIBO in one of the medical databases (PubMed is a great one). C'mon! I dare ya! You'll see that the research is far reaching and irrefutable. Indeed, research into the microbiome in the context of the gut, brain, and skin connection, started in 1937! That there remains so much resistance among health care providers that the state of our gut can impact and indeed be the source of the problem is puzzling. The 19th century writer Arthur Schopenhauer once wrote about truth:

First, it is ridiculed

Second, it is violently opposed

Third, it is accepted as being self evident

There's so much we have yet to understand and it will be years if not decades or more before we begin to unravel the implications of the microbiome on our health. However, to ignore or dismiss its role in the development of the chronic diseases that keep us running back to the doctor time and time again would be a mistake. I'd like to propose a radical idea: Your body isn't broken. You can be free in the most profound of ways. We simply have to disabuse ourselves of the notion that we are 'separate' or somehow 'outside' of this world in which we live and that ultimately, as they say in Texas, "you gotta dance with them that brung ya".

Thank You for taking this time for YOU to read, learn and be inspired!