

A complete guide to
Cycle Syncing®

A comprehensive guide to understanding your cycle so that you can optimize your nutrition and workouts for better sleep, energy and performance.

Getting to know your cycle

Welcome to all things *cycle syncing!*

This guide is meant to help you learn about your cycle on a more intimate level so that you can thrive all month long. We'll go through each week on what you can expect and how you can adjust your nutrition and movement during that time. The goal is to have you harness the power of your hormones during each phase so you can feel like the Queen you are.

In order to dial in your cycle, the first thing I would recommend is downloading an app to track your cycle if you aren't already. There are many options out there such as Clue, Myflo, Apple Health, Whoop (if you have the wearable), just search the app store or the google play store.

We track our cycle because it's important to know where you are in your cycle (in terms of the weeks) and when you can expect to start bleeding.

It's also important to track your cycle so that you can monitor any symptoms month over month and make any lifestyle and/or nutrition changes to help them. Remember that it's normal to experience mild symptoms but it is not normal to have severe symptoms that impact your quality of life.

Lastly, you'll want to track your cycle so that you know not only the length between each cycle but also the days of your flow. A healthy cycle is anywhere from 26 to 35 days and can have flow that lasts anywhere from 3 to 7 days.

If you are outside or well below these ranges, it is very important to track and consult a practitioner who can assist you further.

Please note that this is a guide and not intended for medical advice. You should always listen to your body and the cues that she's giving you. You will always be the best judge of character. Always work with a practitioner to do a deeper dive.



What is *cycle syncing?*

As women we are complex hormone pathways.

Repeat after me: We are not mini men!

Given that we are uniquely created, we need to honour ourselves as such.

Cycle syncing is the process of monitoring where you are throughout your entire cycle and catering your lifestyle, nutrition and movement so that it aligns with each week or phase of your cycle.

Given that we are not mini-men, we shouldn't be going at 100kms/hour every day of the month.

Your cycle is like seasons; in the spring and summer we find ourselves outside a little more and being more social. In fall and winter we tend to tuck in and turn inward a bit more.

The more you get into the habit of honouring each week of your cycle, the more improvement you will notice in your overall symptoms, mood, sleep, body, etc. month after month.

Your hormones are your *superpowers*

It is possible to thrive, have the best sleep, keep our energy up, lose weight and have better cycles.

Once you become more in tune with your body and your cycle, you'll be able to truly harness your hormones and make them your superpowers.

Although there are many hormones at play during our cycle, to help you better understand your cycle this guide will focus on the big 3; estrogen, progesterone and testosterone.

You may have heard of them before but may not be too sure of what they do, how they contribute to a more balanced cycle and how they affect your metabolism and weight.

The goal of this guide is to give you the knowledge and empower you to make the lifestyle and nutrition changes needed in order to have better cycles, energy, sleep and mood.

If you think you may be experiencing any of these symptoms, it is always best practice to consult with a practitioner to dive a little bit deeper.

Estrogen – who is she and why is always around?

Estrogen is present throughout our entire cycle, coming in hot and then leaving so to speak.

You'll see when you dive into each week, that she is generally higher in the first half of your cycle than the later half, which makes sense as in the later half of your cycle your body is getting ready to bleed.

Estrogen is key to your reproductive health by helping stimulate the growth of the egg. It also helps to maintain the thickness of the vaginal wall and promotes lubrication.

Estrogen can greatly influence how we move our bodies. It makes ligaments lax and loose and as our ligaments play a key role in the integrity of our joints, it's important to avoid burst training such as HIIT when estrogen is at its peak as you will be prone to injury.

Another key role of estrogen is that it helps to stiffen our tendons. What this means is that stiff tendons can then strongly pull on bones which means you can lift heavy! Resistance training is important for many reasons such as metabolism, blood sugar, posture but also to help maintain lean muscle mass which is crucial as we age and as estrogen starts to decline.

In perimenopause and menopause (so as you transition out of your reproductive years), estrogen starts to decline and maintaining lean muscle mass during this process is one way to mitigate some of the symptoms.

Some signs of high estrogen could look like:

- low libido
- sleep disturbances
- hot flashes
- mood swings
- brain fog
- excess weight gain, especially in the abdominal area

Some signs of low estrogen could look like:

- painful sex due to a lack of lubrication – excess vaginal dryness
- fatigue that is not relieved by a nap

There are many ways you can balance out your estrogen. You can start small by implementing one of the best practices below and slowly adding in others.

- Get outside in the AM and point your face towards the sun – sunshine helps your circadian rhythm which will help your sleep and mood
- Stress management – if you are in a state of chronic stress your body will favour producing cortisol in lieu of estrogen so learning to manage your stress and triggers will be key to balancing estrogen
- Nasal breathing – this helps to modify your cortisol level. By using breathwork, you can put your body into a parasympathetic state
- Avoid xenoestrogens – xenoestrogens are synthetic chemicals found in plastics and pesticides that mimic estrogen. While this may be one of the most challenging ones, be sure to read your labels carefully and avoid using plastic as much as possible
- Sleep – deep sleep and REM sleep are important for estrogen (and testosterone)
- Elimination – excess estrogen is eliminated via the bowels. This is why focusing on whole foods and eating foods that are high in fiber and support detoxification are key

Progesterone – the 411

Once you've ovulated, progesterone will rise which is a great thing and exactly what we want it to do. We want progesterone high because it will help prime the endometrium for implantation, which is a fancy way of saying that it makes a comfortable home for the fertilized egg.

If you are someone who is in their reproductive years and conception is a goal, you will want to pay close attention during the second half of your cycle as you will be monitoring your body temperature. Progesterone will drive up the core body temperature (its warming) but if you are still waiting then chances are you've already ovulated (and missed the window).

Progesterone is also a rockstar in her own right.

Progesterone is responsible for:

- Reducing breast tenderness and inhibiting the development of cysts
- Preventing the onset of cancer by counteracting the excessive estrogen
- Protecting the cervix
- Affecting our bone health by countering osteoclastic activity (breaking down of bone)
- Helping to lower blood pressure and relax muscle cells

When we're thinking about all of our hormones, there are so many ways that you can help balance them out before going the supplementation route. This involves doubling down on lifestyle changes.



Some ways to help balance out your progesterone:

- Cut down on caffeine usage
- Take steps to actively manage and reduce stress (meditation, breathwork)
- Cut back on overexercising or severely restricting calories
- Focus on whole foods and reducing sugary or refined carbohydrates (for better blood sugar balance)
- Aiming to get better sleep, 7 to 8 hours is a great goal, 9 if you feel you need it
- Improve gut health

Testosterone - yes you have it too!

Most women are surprised to know that they have *testosterone*.

Fun fact: it's the most abundant sex hormone we have! While we have more testosterone than estrogen in the body, we still don't have nearly as much as men.

Testosterone tends to peak in the second week of your cycle and this is where you may find yourself being more extroverted and/or chatty, willing to take a few more risks and putting yourself out there a little more.

Testosterone protects and maintains the muscles that are surrounding the urethra, the vagina, and the anus. As such, testosterone is involved in the strength of your orgasms. because an orgasm is a clonic contraction of the vaginal wall and the perineal muscles.

So naturally, as we talk about the reproductive cycle, testosterone levels are also going to intimately affect your enjoyment of your sex life. Penetrative sex may be painful and you might find that the sensitivity of your clitoris or the strength of your orgasm may decrease.

Why do women need testosterone? Testosterone plays a variety of roles in the body such as:

- Libido
- Bone growth
- Muscle mass
- Regulating body fat
- Supporting a healthy heart
- Cognitive function

Just like the other hormones, we're looking to maintain an optimal level so that they can all work together in harmony and thrive.

Lab work and testing is always a great way to see what your levels are.

As you may have already picked up on the theme; a high stress lifestyle and poor nutrition are two factors that contribute to testosterone (and other hormones) being out of balance.

High testosterone is typically seen in women with polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) which is an endocrine disorder characterized by high androgens. PCOS is a very common hormonal derangement and affects over 100M women worldwide.

To do a deeper dive, I recommend working directly with a practitioner to further investigate if this sounds like you.

While high androgens is a common sign of high testosterone, everyone presents differently with symptoms. Some other symptoms of high testosterone are:

- Not cycling
- Thinning or balding hair (like male pattern)
- Excess facial hair around the chin or mustache
- Hair on chest or back
- Change in fat deposition – bum, thighs, lower tummy
- Might be overweight
- Severe acne
- Irregular periods

As mentioned above, high stress is a huge factor in influencing testosterone levels because as your body will be pumping out more cortisol it will inhibit testosterone production. This is also a factor in women who over exercise.

In addition to stress and over exercising, low testosterone can also be caused by long term use of the birth control pill.

How do you know if you have low testosterone?

- Libido – what is your sex drive like? Your sexual desires?
- Vaginal lubrication
- Sexual intercourse is painful
- Fatigued – are you tired and not relieved by sleep?
- Cognitive function – are you able to focus and concentrate?
- Thinning hair

As you can see, some symptoms of high and low testosterone can overlap with estrogen and progesterone imbalances so while you are learning and practicing stress management techniques and overall lifestyle changes, it's a great idea to work with a practitioner to do a full panel and have everything tested.

Week 1 Bleed week

Day 1 of your bleed (or flow) is considered day 1 of your cycle and should be noted down as such. You'll also want to monitor and note down the colour, consistency and quality of your flow and any symptoms that you may be experiencing both leading up to your flow and during.

All your reproductive hormones will naturally be lower this week compared to the others in your cycle (as you'll see later in the guide).

symptoms

This is the week where the shedding of the endometrial lining happens aka no fertilized egg and you start your bleed. And while it's normal to feel some level of cramping anything excessive that would require you to take medication or be bedridden is not. Symptoms will vary from woman to woman but some other symptoms you may experience are back pain, enlarged or tender breasts, acne or headaches.

movement

For the first 1-4 days estrogen and testosterone are low which means you may want to do some lighter or gentler movement or even take the days off. Walking is a great option here and of course if you feel up to it, you can jump into some weight training.

As you near the end of the week, estrogen is starting to make a rise and this is a great time to take advantage and go heavier in the gym! Harness that power and increase the weights you would normally use and work in a rep range of 8-12 depending on that weight.

Any form of cardio such as High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) or Low Intensity Steady State (LISS) is fine during this week with a max of 1 to 2 sessions.

A key point to note is that a HIIT session should be no longer than 45 minutes and LISS no longer than 75 minutes as anything above these numbers will flip it into a proinflammatory state which is counterproductive.

nutrition

During your bleed week, there should be a major focus on blood building foods that are high in iron such as organ meats (dark meats), chicken thighs, lamb and red meat.

You'll also want to increase your good fats which are your nuts, seeds, legumes and oils (olive, coconut, avocado).

Hydration is key during this week as you're losing more fluid than usual! Dehydration sends a stress signal to your brain so you should aim to consume 3 to 4 liters a day of fluids such as water, herbal teas, soups or foods with a higher water content. Remember that you're losing a lot of liquid this week so you want to drink half of your bodyweight in ounces.

supplements

As mentioned above, increasing your good fats through food sources should always be the priority, but you can also supplement with some Omega 3s.

Generally women are deficient in magnesium and vitamin D. Depending on where you live and how much exposure to sunlight you get, an optimal level of vitamin D would be around 2000 IU/day.

Magnesium (400g) is also a fantastic supplement during this time because it helps with the cramping and relaxation. You'll see recommendations for these supplements throughout the guide.

emotions

This is a great time to set new goals and problem solve. Your subconscious loves questions, so ask it how will you get through this particular problem, how will you solve this problem?

You'll see
recommendations
for these
supplements
throughout the
guide.

Week 2 Follicular Phase

You are now in the follicular phase which means estrogen will be at the highest level during your cycle.

During this week, Follicular Stimulating Hormone (FSH) is working to stimulate the follicle and develop the follicle that houses the egg within it. This is where ovulation prep is beginning so if you're someone who is trying to conceive you'll be paying close attention during this time.

As estrogen peaks (and it has to be high) it creates a high amplitude pulse which favors the luteinizing hormone.

The egg will then be released from the follicle approximately 10 to 12 hours after the peak of luteinizing hormone, this is why if reproduction is a goal for you, timing is everything. You'll ovulate somewhere between 10 to 36 hours after and then depending on the health of the egg, it lives from 4 hours to a maximum of 24 hours.

Again, if conception is your goal you have hours to conceive.

During this week, generally speaking, libido should rise, so thinking back to testosterone's impact on sexual health, you might find your orgasms are much more profound, much more powerful this week. The clitoris is much more sensitive.

symptoms

You may be feeling more energized –
this is great!

You may also see a rise in your libido this week due to the slight increase in testosterone. This means your orgasms may be more powerful so this may be a great time to be more sexually expressive (and adventurous) with your partner ;)

movement

Given that estrogen and testosterone are at their peak we want to maximize our muscle gains! This is a great time to focus on heavy lifting, working in the 5–8 rep range and 5 sets but increasing your weights. You almost want to be working to the point of fatigue.

Focus on hitting the big muscle groups – glutes, legs and back.

As estrogen is high this week, this tends to make the ligaments looser which makes you prone to injury so stay away from any HIIT training this week.

If you want to add in any cardio, Low Intensity Steady State (LISS) is a great option, staying in zones 2 and 3.

This can also be a great time to increase your daily step count and get outside for a walk. Don't underestimate the power of a walk! Anything north of 5k steps a day is a great start.

nutrition

If you are resistance training and going much heavier, there is a strong emphasis on protein and carbs during this week. The goal is to pair the two together and get a little more glucose into the muscles so that they can grow.

Eating more carbs is something that you'll need to become more comfortable with because you've probably been told like many other women have been taught, that carbs are the enemy. They are not!

You might consider a macro split of 40, 40, 20, – that's 40% protein, 40% carbs, and 20% fat or look to do 40% fat, 40% protein, and 20% carbs. This will be dependent on your activity level and overall goals.

supplements

Similar to week 1, Omega 3s are great here, focusing on the DHA (2–3g/day).

Magnesium (400g) is also a fantastic supplement during this time to help with the cramping and relaxation.

emotions

You'll feel energized and like you want to 'people' so set a few social dates, network, invite people over or accept invites.

Your sleep is restful and your mood will be elevated. Protect this energy. Take this opportunity to use this energy to align to your highest value, choose where to spend this sacred energy wisely.

Week 3 Luteal Phase

Assuming that ovulation has happened, the egg will live 4–24 hours depending on the health of the egg. This is where the egg selects the sperm in the vicinity so you want to make sure the sperm is waiting.

Progesterone rises after ovulation and will drive your core body temperature up. If you're waiting for the temperature spike, chances are you've already ovulated. A big role of progesterone is to prime the endometrium for implantation and that is why we want progesterone high.

Towards the middle of week three, we see estrogen rise again and she'll stay elevated until about the middle of week 4.

symptoms

You may feel some PMS-like symptoms this week and it may feel like week 1 with estrogen low in the beginning of the week and rising toward the end (but nowhere like week 2).

nutrition

This week you can back off the carbs a bit and shift to focusing on more fats to honour low estrogen levels during this week.

Focusing on green leafy vegetables (ie. collards, spinach, kale, dandelion) and root veggies (ie. beets, carrots) to help support the liver and help the body detox any excess estrogen.

As you increase your vegetables and fiber intake, you'll also want to increase your fluid intake and drink 3–4 litres of water a day.

Another great addition to your nutrition this week is resistant starches to help quell any cravings that you may have. They are great for your microbiome (aka gut) and produce butyrate – which provides fuel for the cells of your gut lining, immune system functions and protects against disease in the digestive tract.

movement

Estrogen is slowly making a decline so it's time to shift to moderate weight lifting. (As mentioned above, it has a slight rise towards the end of the week but nothing like week 2).

A good rep range to start with is 12 at the beginning of the week and 8 towards the end of week (as estrogen is rising).

Some other great movement options to explore are power yoga or pilates.

This week you can do any type of cardio including either LISS or HIIT. I would recommend HIIT at the beginning of the week and LISS towards the end if you're doing any cardio.

emotions

This is a great week for productivity. Time to tackle your to-do list and get stuff done. It can also be a great time to schedule a talk, a podcast or ask for a raise at work.

supplements

By now you'll see a trend with the supplements and that you can't really go wrong with Omegas and Magnesium.

day 1: push/squat

Again, supplementing with 2-3g/day of omega 3s and up to 600mg of Magnesium if you can tolerate it. If you experience any digestive issues, that is your sign to decrease the dosage back down to 400mg.

You may be experiencing some inflammation during this week so Curcumin is a great addition with a dosage of 1-2g a day or as needed.

Check In

- What are some symptoms that happen every month?
- How is my stress level? Am I reacting or responding?
- How is my sleep? How many hours am I sleeping? Am I waking up feeling rested?
- How are my overall energy levels? Am I feeling tired midday?

Week 4

As you start to prepare for your bleed week, implement a few days of rest, recovery and reflection towards the end of the week.

During the middle of the week both progesterone and estrogen decrease and the body realizes there is no egg and needs to reset. The endometrial lining becomes ischemic which means no oxygen and prepares to bleed and repeat the cycle all over again.

symptoms

You'll notice that your appetite has increased along with some food cravings and your caloric intake.

movement

This is a great time to lighten up the weight but increase the rep count so anywhere from 15 to 20 reps and 4 sets is suitable. You'll still be working the muscle but not quite to fatigue but pretty close to that.

Some other great movement options to explore this week are hatha or restorative yoga, lots of stretching and mobility work.

In terms of cardio, you can do HIIT or LISS this week but again keeping the sessions to the same guidelines as before. Anything above those numbers flips it into a proinflammatory state which is counterproductive.

Listen to your body to see what movement it actually needs this week and lean into that.

nutrition

Given your appetite may be increasing here, you can increase your caloric intake and enjoy the food!

An increase in good fats and blood building foods to help you prepare for your bleed week are fantastic options here, as well as continuing with the resistant starches.

supplements

Supplementation here is the same as week 3.

Again, supplementing with 2-3g/day of omega 3s and up to 600mg of Magnesium if you can tolerate it. If you experience any digestive issues that is your sign to decrease the dosage back to 400mg.

Continue with the curcumin as needed.

emotions

You may find that you are more irritable this week and may not want to 'people' much. That's okay! Be mindful of your emotions and observe how you feel without judgment (both yourself and others) and always making your needs the first priority.

Because of how we're feeling during this week, we're naturally biased to view things in a more negative light and partially due to change in serotonin and dopamine. See this as an opportunity to where you might be unsatisfied in your life and figure out the things that are bothering you the most.

You can ask yourself what are some of the things you may consider changing in the next cycle. Think of this week as you highlighting the page and your bleed week as solving it.

