



HELP YOURSELF TO A DOSE OF THESE 5

happy hormones!

THE HUMAN BODY is made up of around 50 different hormones that work as chemical messengers, aiding in many important functions and processes within your body such as heart rate, digestion, sleep, and growth. Five of these hormones in particular, however, are known for their involvement in the regulation of mood, pleasure, bonding, and trust. We call these the “happy hormones.”

Learn about these five scientific secrets to your happiness and how to boost them naturally:



DOPAMINE

This happy hormone is an important neurotransmitter that is responsible for your brain's reward system, while also driving your motivation, memory, and attention.

+ *Increase your dopamine levels easily and naturally by eating more protein-rich foods, exercising, listening to your favorite music, and getting some sunshine.*

SEROTONIN

Serotonin is essential in transmitting information across the nervous system and assisting with brain function, where it is thought to regulate anxiety, happiness, and mood.

+ *Sunshine and exercise help to increase serotonin levels, much like dopamine, but eating carbohydrates and drinking plenty of fluids are also great ways to get a healthy helping of this happy hormone.*

OXYTOCIN

With multiple nicknames such as the love hormone, the cuddle hormone, and the bonding hormone, it makes sense that oxytocin plays such an important role in happiness and social interaction, while helping people bond through things such as trust, generosity, and open communication.

+ *Treat yourself to a massage, do something kind for someone else, dedicate some time to snuggle with a loved one, or pet your dog to envelope yourself in an easy boost of oxytocin.*

ESTROGEN

Estrogen works closely with the parts of the brain that control emotion, regulate mood, and modify the effects of endorphins, known as the brain's “feel-good” chemicals, by working within your body to increase the number of serotonin receptors in the brain.

+ *Increase your estrogen levels by eating a well-rounded healthy diet, pick up your dumbbells for some weight-bearing exercises, or just sit back and sip on some herbal tea.*

PROGESTERONE

By acting as a natural antidepressant, progesterone has the ability to help regulate mood swings and aid in relieving postpartum depression. This hormone also assists in increasing your energy levels through thyroid stimulation and speeding up your metabolism.

+ *Find a happy balance of this hormone through practicing meditation or relieving stress through journaling, reading, or listening to music.*

SHOULD I TAKE THE GENETIC TEST FOR BREAST CANCER?


THE FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN can be a particularly unsettling demon to encounter, especially when dealing with the knowledge that you may be at a higher risk of developing breast cancer. In the United States, 5-10 percent of breast cancer cases may be traced back to an inherited gene mutation. Approximately half of these cases are linked to Breast Cancer genes 1 and 2, known as BRCA1 and BRCA2. You might be at an increased risk of developing breast cancer due to an inherited gene mutation if you have any of the following:

- ➔ A personal history of breast cancer diagnosed before age 45
- ➔ One or more relatives with breast cancer, or an unknown or limited family medical history
- ➔ A personal history of two or more types of cancer
- ➔ A personal or family history of ovarian cancer, prostate cancer, pancreatic cancer, or male breast cancer
- ➔ A personal history of breast cancer and Ashkenazi (Eastern European) Jewish ancestry
- ➔ A history of two or more relatives with BRCA-associated cancers
- ➔ A history of breast cancer at a young age in two or more blood relatives, such as your parents, siblings, or children
- ➔ A relative with a known BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutation

While most breast cancers are not a result of inherited gene mutations, for individuals who are likely to have an inherited gene mutation based on personal or family history meeting the above criteria, the BRCA gene test may be a viable option to learn more about your risks.

The Breast Cancer (BRCA) gene test is a DNA analysis taken from a blood or saliva sample in order to identify harmful mutations within the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes in people who are at a higher risk of developing breast cancer or ovarian cancer than the rest of the general population.

Deciding to take this test through a clinically-approved lab that is certified by the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) may allow people with the BRCA gene mutation to personalize their breast cancer screening plan, gain in-depth knowledge about their cancer risk, and look into options that may reduce the risk of developing cancer. This test may also provide family members with the opportunity to assess their own risk and determine if genetic testing may benefit them as well, as the children of people with a high-risk gene mutation have a 50 percent chance of inheriting the mutation.

If you find yourself with an increased risk of having an inherited gene mutation related to breast cancer, consider making an appointment with a genetic counselor to see if genetic testing is right for you. 



if someone you love HAS BREAST CANCER

THERE IS NO WAY TO FULLY UNDERSTAND the thoughts and feelings that whirl through someone's mind when they hear the words "you have cancer." In the moment, it may seem selfish to allow yourself to feel your own emotional response—fear, anger, sadness, helplessness—when one of the people you love has just had their entire world turned upside down. You are not helpless though. You have the opportunity to play an important role in supporting your loved one. Here are some suggestions from Komen.org—

RESPECT THEIR BOUNDARIES.

Pay close attention to how your loved one is feeling. It is important to offer your support, but avoid asking too many questions so as not to overwhelm them. Sometimes all they need is for you to keep them in your thoughts and respect their space.

BE A GOOD LISTENER.

Whether your loved one wants to talk about what they are going through, is looking for a shoulder to cry on, or simply wants to get their mind off of things, it is extremely important that you are there to listen to what they have to say. Lend an ear and pay attention to what they need.

DO SOMETHING NICE FOR THEM.

There are many kind gestures that can go a long way in supporting your loved one and showing them that you care. It can be as simple as accompanying them to their chemotherapy with a game to play or a hand to hold, or surprising them with their favorite food and a movie night!

CREATE A NETWORK OF SUPPORT.

Help them feel the love! Bring together friends, family, loved ones, and coworkers to create a social network where everyone can stay connected and in the loop with what is going on. The CaringBridge organization offers a free website for friends and family to connect with each other and stay updated, while allowing them to leave encouraging messages and organize events, get-togethers, and other activities.

LOVE THEM UP!

If someone you love has breast cancer, there are many things that you can do to offer your support and show that you are there for them. Perhaps the most important, though, is to love them unconditionally every step of the way, from the moment they tell you about their diagnosis to after their health starts improving. No matter how you decide to get involved or help them through their fight, always remember that simply showing love is the key. 