



## **Dr. Ben Gonzalez of *The Atlantis Medical Wellness Center* Explains Bioidentical Hormone Therapy and it's Benefits**

**Background:** Atlantis Medical Wellness Center is dedicated to providing the latest and most advanced aesthetic and age management services. Medical Director Dr. Benjamin Gonzalez, MD is a graduate of the University of Arizona College of Medicine and is board certified in Emergency Medicine. Dr. Gonzalez has multiple certifications in advanced laser surgery, laser assisted and ultrasound assisted liposuction. He teaches other physicians in the techniques of skin rejuvenation and body sculpting. He is trained in the advanced techniques of Hormone Replacement Therapy and combines his expertise in Age Management Medicine in his approach to all his patients.

### **INTERVIEW**

**Q: Dr. Gonzalez, in the last few weeks Oprah has been featuring shows about hormone replacement therapy which seems to be making a lot of women think this might be something they need. What would be some signs that you're suffering from hormone deficiency and should come in for a consultation?**

Many individuals, men and women begin to feel like their body is slowing down. Many of the symptoms are subtle and creep up slowly over the years until you find yourself in a place you never thought you would be: 20 lbs overweight, low energy, low sex drive, unable to enjoy the things you used to, the inability to lose weight even if you eat less or exercise more. Other symptoms include chronic headaches, mood swings, low stamina, and low sex drive. We blame it on "aging." Less obvious health issues such as early osteoporosis, cancer and stroke risk, heart disease, and Alzheimer's disease risk can be lowered significantly with hormone evaluation and balance.

**Q: Is it just peri-menopausal or menopausal women who need to be concerned about hormone problems?**

No. There are many people out there, men and women at all ages that have hormone deficiencies or unbalanced hormone ratios that affect not only how they feel but affect the individual's risk levels for certain cancers or chronic health issues.

**Q: Is this just about slowing down or reversing the aging process?**

No. Sorry, nothing reverses aging. You can, however, slow it down a bit with good healthy choices in exercise, nutrition and hormone balancing. Decreasing the risk of certain cancers such as colon, breast and prostate cancer is an important part of hormone balancing and optimizing. This is not about “anti –aging” or extending life. It is about improving the quality of life.

**Q: Are there specific tests that can tell you exactly what hormones are deficient?**

There are many types of tests to evaluate the many hormones we have in our body. There are hair samples, skin, saliva, and blood tests. For now, the best tests are the direct blood tests. There are specific kinds of blood tests that many physicians are not aware of. Finding someone trained and experienced in hormone evaluation is important. It is not always about the test results, rather correlating a person’s symptoms and complaints with those tests. There are many diabetic and pre-diabetic, hypo and pre-hypothyroid people out there with “normal” lab results. Remember, “normal” results does not always mean optimal.

**Q: What about over-the-counter creams and tests?**

Products purchased over-the-counter are not usually of a strength sufficient to produce long term therapeutic differences. Some people will feel differences only because they are so deficient that anything helps. But long term treatment must be implemented in order to have maximum health benefits. Saliva tests have consistently been shown to be inaccurate. Saliva levels of hormones do not always directly correlate with the active hormone level in the blood.

**Q: Once you determine a woman has these deficiencies is it pretty much a standard treatment for everyone?**

Absolutely not. Each person needs individualized treatments based on not only lab results, but must be evaluated along with the individual’s symptoms as well.

**Q: What about synthetic vs. bioidentical hormones or are those the same thing?**

They are not the same. Synthetic hormones such as estrogen (ie Premarin®) and progesterones (ie Progestin, Provera®) and combinations of the two, synthetic testosterone and thyroid hormones (Synthroid) are overall good drugs but they are synthetic. They are not a perfect match for the body. These can have potential problems such as increased risk for certain cancers. Some of these have less predictable effects on an individual’s physiology and are thus less effective or tolerable. Bioidentical hormones are made to match exactly what your body has. The exact molecule. The body accepts and metabolizes these bioidentical hormones as if it made them.

**Q: But I heard hormone replacement can cause an increase risk in cancers.**

This is a half truth. It is unfortunate but the media and even some health providers perpetuate generalities concerning research. Specifically, the Women’s Health Initiative (WHI) was a study that evaluated the use of Premarin® and Prempro®. It was found early that these increased the risk of stroke and breast cancer respectively. Unfortunately, the media misrepresented the facts by stating that all hormones cause cancer or increase the risk of cancer. This is not true. This is true of only the synthetic hormones, not the bioidentical ones.

**Q: What types of improvement in mood, appearance and well-being would someone experience as a result of hormone therapy?**

First, the right balance of the right hormones need to occur. A proper evaluation and treatment can not only improve mood, well being, and appearance, but more importantly can provide protective benefits from such things as osteoporosis, certain cancers, and Alzheimer's disease.

**Q: Is it something you would take for the rest of your life or can you stop once your symptoms improve?**

That is dependant on the hormone issue that is being treated. Type I diabetics must stay on insulin. Some hormones can be used temporarily during symptomatic periods and stopped later. It all depends on the issue that is being treated.

**Q: As part of your hormone therapy program is it just hormones you prescribe or are there other vitamins and supplements that can help?**

Discussion of supplements can be a whole other interview! In general, there are many over-the-counter supplements that just do not do any good and a great deal of money is spent by consumers on supplements that do nothing for them. It is not just about the supplement, rather where the supplement is made, how it is taken and why it is taken.

**Q: Is there anything else you would like to add regarding the effect of hormones?**

Optimal Hormone Levels can help slow down the effects of time, assist in increasing the resistance against age-related disease like Cancer, Stroke, Coronary Artery Disease, Osteoporosis, and Alzheimer's Disease. It can offer more energy, stamina, strength, and endurance and improve mood. Hormone replacement can help you look better, stay healthier, and enjoy an improved quality of life.

Over the last few decades research in the fields of endocrinology and immunology has improved our knowledge as to how and why we age. The endocrine system and the hormones that play a role in how we feel and how we age are complicated. You can take a sample group of people out of the population of say, ten 40 year old men and ten 40 year old women. Some look (and feel) like they are in their 20s, some look their age and some may look like they are 50 or older. Some people age fast than others. Yes, a part of the process has to do with genetic make-up. Much has to do with how we take care of ourselves and a great deal has to do with how our hormones are balanced. Each thing that affects how we feel and how we age needs to be addressed.

"YOU CAN'T TURN BACK THE CLOCK, BUT YOU CAN WIND IT UP AGAIN." – Some anonymous physician

**Dr. Ben Gonzalez**  
**Atlantis Medical Wellness Center**  
**1220 Tech Road, Suite 102**  
**Silver Spring, MD 20904**

**Phone: 301.622.2722**  
**[www.atlantismedispa.com](http://www.atlantismedispa.com)**