

Birth Control Bliss

How to Transition Off Hormonal Birth
Control in 8 Weeks

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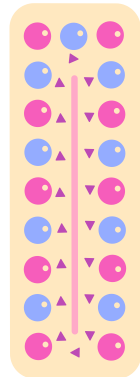
Hello and welcome to

Birth Control Bliss!

I'm Olivia and I am a Nutritional Therapy Practitioner (NTP), which means I am trained to use a foundational and bio-individual approach to balance body chemistry and achieve optimal wellness. In other words, I work to support you and your body's innate ability to heal.

My health journey started when I was diagnosed with Ulcerative Colitis at 18 years old. Years of constant digestive troubles and uncontrollable trips to the bathroom along with sporadic mental health battles led me to explore nutrition and how food impacts the way we feel.

Along the way I discovered that hormonal birth control was at the root of my health issues. **The pill I was prescribed to clear my face caused my body to develop a chronic disease. Not only that, but it directly changed the way I thought and felt at every moment.**

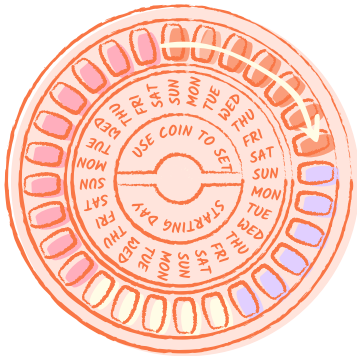


Hormonal birth control (HBC) is given out like candy as if it is harmless to our bodies. It doesn't even come to mind when something goes wrong or when we're asked what medications we're on. There's no way our birth control could be causing digestive issues, heart issues or reproductive issues... Right? Doctors are even guilty of this mindset with the firm belief that hormonal birth control is completely safe with no risk to our health.

Our bodies are intricate networks and everything is interrelated. **There is no such thing as a medication that targets one area, one organ, one system.** And if you read the fine print, you'll question what the manufacturers actually do know—about any medication.

HBC changes our hormones, which control every process in our body. It has a wide-ranging effect on our:

Partner Choice: Studies show HBC may blunt women's senses to the extent that we are more likely to choose a partner who is more similar to us than different, genetically speaking (Hill, 2019). On a biological level, we naturally choose partners with different



genes from ours, which makes them an ideal choice for procreation because the baby we create will have a strong immune system, improving their chances of survival. HBC changes that.

Sex Drive: Testosterone levels are important in our sexual arousal and responsiveness. Research shows that HBC can cause women's levels to fall drastically by causing the body to produce less testosterone and produce proteins that bind to testosterone, making the little that we have produced inactive (Hill, 2019).

Stress Response: Studies suggest that HBC puts our stress system into overdrive to the point where we are put in a state of chronic stress. This can lead to things like glucose intolerance (pre-diabetes), weight gain and heart disease (Hill, 2019).

Inflammation: Because the stress system is in overdrive, the body tries to shut stress down to calm itself. Cortisol, which is important in our stress response, also plays a key role in inflammation management (Hill, 2019). So when cortisol is shut down, our inflammatory responses can become dysregulated, leading to chronic diseases (Khalili, 2013) and mental health issues, like anxiety and depression (Skovlund et al, 2016).

Nutrient Deficiencies: HBC depletes vital nutrients like B vitamins, magnesium, selenium, zinc, vitamin C and vitamin E (Thorp, 1980; Wilson et al, 2011).

Hormones: On HBC, we get a daily hit of synthetic estrogen and progestin (a synthetic form of progesterone) at levels that our brain interprets as similar to the second half of

our cycle, or the luteal phase (Hill, 2019). HBC changes our hormones, which are the very essence of who we are. They are the messengers in our bodies. They control everything from digestion to metabolism, to our moods, and are at the very core of our personalities.

Overall Outlook On Life: When on HBC and our stress response is in a constant state of overdrive, we can't process complex emotional information properly. So those meaningful, deeply emotional moments aren't able to become a part of who we are, which can make us feel numb to our lives, and as if we lack meaning and depth.

When I got off the birth control pill, I began to understand what it felt like to be alive. **It was as if my world was colorful again.** Everything was more vibrant—more magical. I had never felt more like myself. And of course that was scary because I didn't know who this new person was. I had to get to know her and learn about her. I had to explore for myself who I was and what I liked. Over time I felt myself change and I began to realize just how deadened I had felt. Numb, boring, masculine. No wonder I was so unsatisfied with my life.



My goal with this guide is to give you the steps to reconnect with your body's natural rhythm. I want you to be your own source of healing power. I want you to see just how deeply intelligent your body is.

This is everything I've learned, all the resources I've found, all the knowledge I've gained and steps I've taken to reconnect with my body and my spirit through my own transition off hormonal birth control. **I want to share it with you because I want you to learn from the things I did not know.** I want you to feel the freedom and full body love I feel. We should feel connected to who we are, our bodies and our true nature. I want you to feel the fullness of life and the vibrancy of what it has to offer. I want you to feel the full spectrum, not just some dulled experience played on repeat for the rest of your days while you just try to "make it through." No. Fuck that.



Women are the liveliest beings on the planet. We bring incredible light and joy to the world. We are irreplaceable and it infuriates me that we are prescribed these medications that dull our sparkle. Why should we have to sacrifice our hormones, our personalities, our light and magic?

You know your body. You know exactly how you feel and what your body does and doesn't like. You know better than anyone else. And it's within your power to take full control over your health. **We can empower ourselves with knowledge and we can connect with our bodies and our intuition, our innate intelligence. We can get to know our bodies and learn about the science that makes us who we are so that we can use natural methods that let us keep our beauty and our light.** And that's what I want to share with you.

Your journey will be different. We all have different bio-individual needs. Our genetics vary, our environments vary, our stress levels and lifestyles vary. But the ideas in this guide are well-researched and are ways for you to feel empowered to take control of your health.

I am so excited for you to embark on this journey and hope you find these steps as a helpful guide for you along the way.

♡ Olivia

Part One

Prepare Your Mindset

Week One

Your "Why" & Your Habits

Your 'Why'

The first and most important step in the process of transitioning off hormonal birth control is clarifying and fully embodying your "why." This is your purpose that is driving you to make this life change. It's the fire that will keep you going when things get hard. It's the mantra you can come back to to keep you focused when doubts start to creep into your mind.

Take time with this. Think deeply about it so that it fires you up, excites you or infuriates you. *Feel* it. And then write it down with that same feeling so when you read it again later you will feel the same emotions and the same drive to do what you set out to do.



You are about to go on a journey with a lot of changes that take time, energy and patience to build into your life. Deeply resonating with the reason you are doing it will help keep you focused on building the life you truly want.

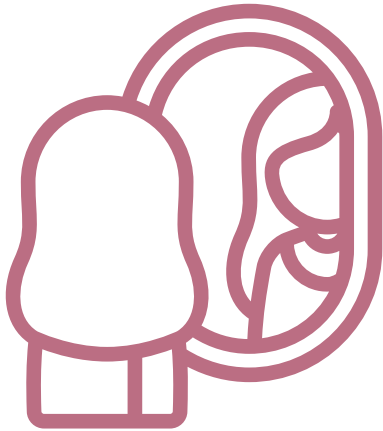
Your Habit Tendency

Building healthy habits is hard. It might be the hardest part of this process. We want to make each habit you build easy and sustainable. Habits are all about what is programmed into our brains. When we add something new, we have to create a new pathway. The more we do this new thing, the stronger the connection gets and the easier it gets. But when we don't work on strengthening that pathway, we fall back into the programming and the patterns that we've previously engrained into our brains.

The goal is to design habits that are easy to fall back on, especially when life gets hard and we get lazy, or overwhelmed. We need to see the underlying reason and feel that reason in our bones (hence our "why"). We have to have a strong enough purpose for us to keep going. We all slip on our habits. Don't worry, it happens. We get cocky and we think we don't need the habit we've built anymore. Until we break it and we realize how much better we felt when we were doing it. We just need to make sure we don't slip all

the way back to the point where we have to start all over again.

There are two ideas on habits that are worth noting to help you:



1. Make Your Habits Your Identity

First, instead of simply establishing a new habit, you need to make that habit a part of who you are. You need to identify with it to make it easier to build and, more importantly, to make it easier to keep. So a habit of "I want to read a book," becomes "I want to become a reader." This is the way our brains work. Our behaviors are generally a reflection of who we are. The way you act is a reflection of the type of person you believe that you are (Clear, 2018).

And you need proof of those actions to support your identity. In other words, the more you act in the way you desire, the more you prove to yourself that you are the type of person you desire to be.

When you take action that aligns with the person you want to be, you build trust with yourself. You strengthen those pathways in your mind and it becomes second nature because it becomes engrained in who you are.

These do not have to be enormous, sweeping life changes. You need to create the opportunity for small wins that you can make consistently. If you want to start a reading habit (or "become a reader"), you can start as small as reading one page per day. If that's too daunting, read one paragraph or one sentence. After a few days or a week of consistency, then increase the goal. Over time, you will get closer to your ultimate goal.

Small wins are important. They compound into bigger wins over time. It takes patience and consistency. It may even feel boring or like you aren't making enough progress in the moment. Do it anyway. If you are someone who struggles to build habits (like 99% of us), start with the lowest barrier to entry for your chosen habit that you can manage. Make it as easy as possible for you to take action daily. Design it so that it seamlessly fits into your

schedule. Make it small enough that you do not feel daunted or intimidated. These are small wins, but they are still wins!

'Incentives can start a habit. Identity sustains a habit.'

– James Clear, Atomic Habits

2. Change Your Environment

Your behavior changes based on the environment you are in and the cues that are in front of you. Take time to create an environment that makes you excited to start your new habit.



For example, say you would like to drink more tea and less coffee. Maybe you decide to splurge on a tea kettle that perfectly suits your decor, is high quality and makes you feel excited to use it. Because you have now associated your new tea habit with something positive, you are more likely to follow through and reinforce that habit.

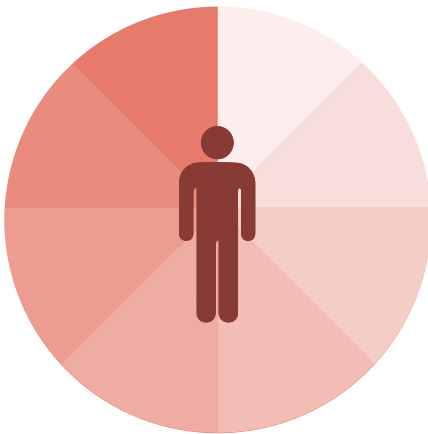
I'm not saying you need to spend a ton of money on a new life—get creative. You can change or rearrange anything to make it more exciting to your brain.

Think about going to the grocery store and choosing not to purchase any food that you know is not going to be good for you. When it isn't in your cabinet in front of you, staring you in the face, it makes it a hell of a lot easier to say no. Especially when the cost to get it would be having to drive all the way to the store to buy it versus reaching from your cabinet. If you're like me and go on autopilot in the grocery store, go to a new store so you don't unconsciously grab those unhealthy snacks.

Again, we fall back on our habits, so when we design our environments to align with the habits we want to create, it becomes much easier for us to maintain the habits we want.

'Environment is the invisible hand that shapes human behavior.'

James Clear, Atomic Habits



3. Everyone Has A Different Habit Personality

According to Gretchen Rubin, there are 4 habit tendencies: questioner, upholder, obliher and rebel (Rubin, 2016). Following are short descriptions of each. If you struggle to create new habits, identifying which type of habit tendency you have can be extremely beneficial in helping you to work with your personal style and make things stick.

You can take the quiz at <https://quiz.gretchenrubin.com/> to get a free detailed report on your tendency and what will work best for you to create new habits around food, exercise and sleep, all of which are crucial for transitioning off hormonal birth control naturally.

Questioner: Resists outer expectations but meets inner expectations

"I do what I think is best, according to my judgment. If it doesn't make sense, I won't do it."

Upholder: Meets outer expectations and meets inner expectations

"I do what others expect of me—and what I expect from myself."

Obliger: Meets outer expectations but resists inner expectations

"I do what I have to do. I don't want to let others down, but I may let myself down."

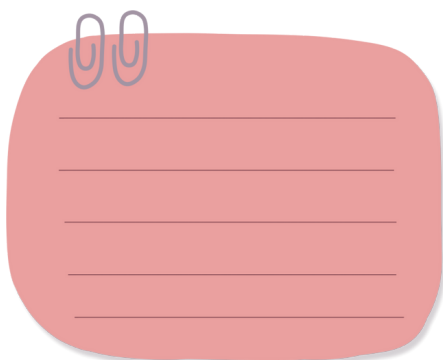
Rebel: Resists outer expectations and resists inner expectations

"I do what I want, in my own way. If you try to make me do something—even if I try to make myself do something—I'm less likely to do it."

Habit Tracking

Even if you hate logging and keeping track of things, it's crucial to do so throughout this process, at least temporarily. Over these next 8 weeks, track everything that has to do with your body and mind.

The goal is not to stress you out or add more to your plate. **The goal to reconnect with your body and listen to its innate intelligence.** Your body knows what it needs and believe it or not, it tells you. You just have to listen. But listening is hard, especially after being disconnected while on HBC. So until you reacquaint yourself with your body and know it impeccably well, you'll want to learn everything you can about it as you transition off HBC and get back to its natural rhythm.



You'll want to track what you eat, how much, when, how much water you're drinking throughout the day and when. You'll take pulse checks on how you're feeling both mentally and physically throughout the day to look for any fluctuations. You'll take note of when and how you slept and how you felt waking up, plus your energy levels throughout the day. Lastly, you'll note your bowel movements. In addition to your period, which is said to be your fifth vital sign, your bowel movements are a key indicator of your gut health. And your gut health dictates everything else since that's the method by which you're getting all your nutrients from food. It's all related!

Included with this guide is a handy food and mood journal that you can use to track everything. Frame it as curiosity. You're learning about your body. You're giving it the attention it needs so that you can understand what it's telling you. It's a magical thing to truly feel into your body and work with it. It's a deep, intuitive knowing that translates to all aspects of your life. Keep up with it. Make it a priority so that you can easily spot patterns over time when you're feeling off and don't understand what's going on. And then you can change your habits. I promise it will be a great resource to fall back on when you feel like things aren't going the way you'd like them to.

Next Steps

1 **Set aside a block of 30 minutes this week to meditate on your "why."** Channel the deep passion that is driving you to make this change for yourself. Whether it's fury at how hormonal birth control affects your health or the pure joy you seek by fully embracing your natural cycle. Write it down. Be detailed. *Feel* it and let the emotion shine through your writing.

2 **Take Gretchen Rubin's free quiz to find out your habit tendency. Reflect on how it fits into what you know about yourself and how you form habits.** Consider how you can use this knowledge to design the life you want for yourself and how you can weave the habits you want to create into your life.

3 **Download or print out the Food & Mood Journal included with this guide. Start with tracking one aspect of your habits this week.** For example, start with sleep. How many hours did you get? Did you feel rested when you woke up? What time did you go to sleep? What time did you wake? Did you wake up in the middle of the night for any reason? Do this every day this week. Start bringing attention to your body and begin forming the habit of tracking and finding patterns.



Part Two

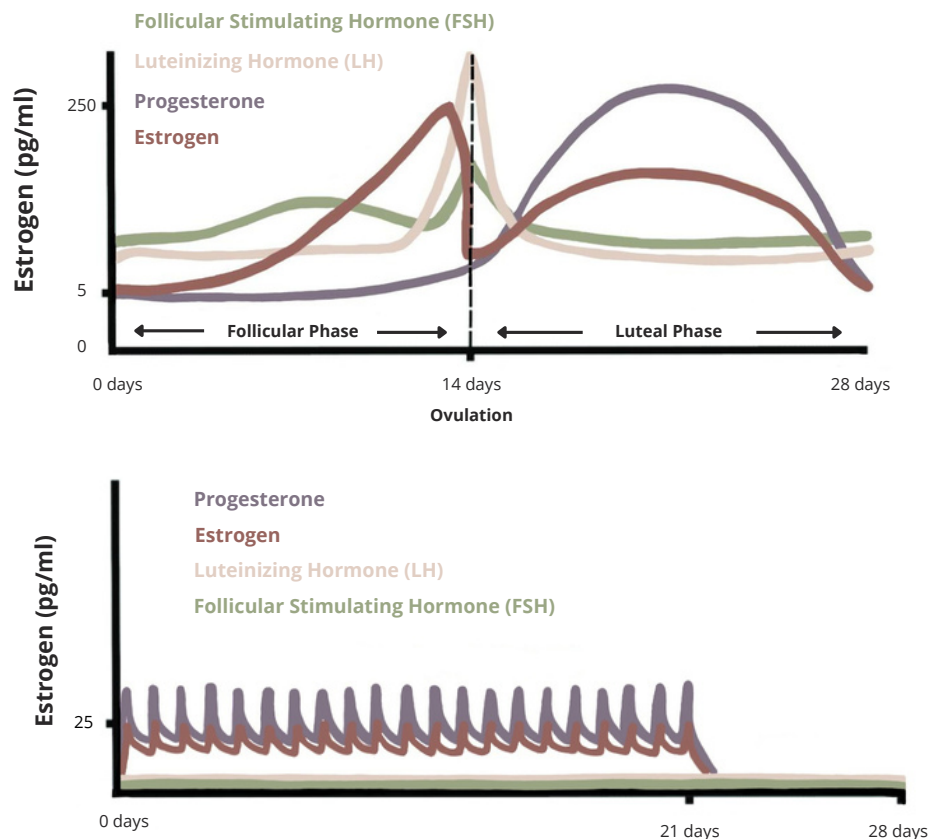
Prepare Your Body

Week Two

Your Natural Cycle & Cycle Syncing

Your Natural Cycle

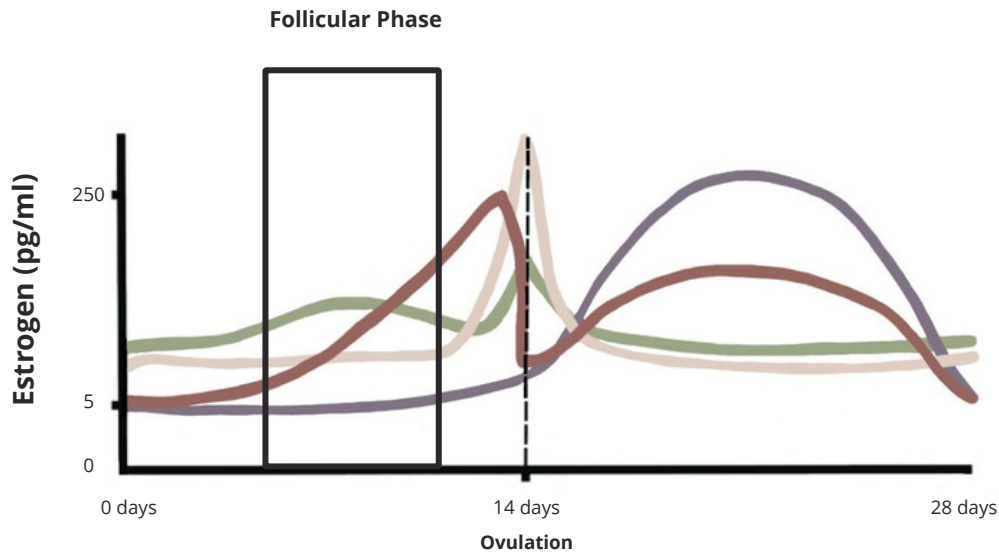
Let's learn about your beautiful, natural cycle: what hormone levels should look like, what's happening in your body, how you should feel and what you should expect. Below is a look at what your hormone levels are during your natural cycle compared to what they are on hormonal birth control (Chidi-Ogbolu & Baar, 2019). No wonder we feel like different people!



Generally speaking, the first half of our cycle is about the body preparing an egg to be fertilized and having sex in order to do so. The second half is about the body preparing itself for a fertilized egg, or pregnancy.

There are four phases to our cycle: follicular, ovulatory, luteal and menstrual. Most people and cycle syncing apps start your cycle with the first day of your period (the menstrual phase). It's easier to track that way but we're going to start from a different beginning, right after your period. Each of the following summaries are loosely based on **Alisa Vitti's book, *WomanCode***, which is an incredible resource for cycle syncing!

Follicular Phase (7-10 days)

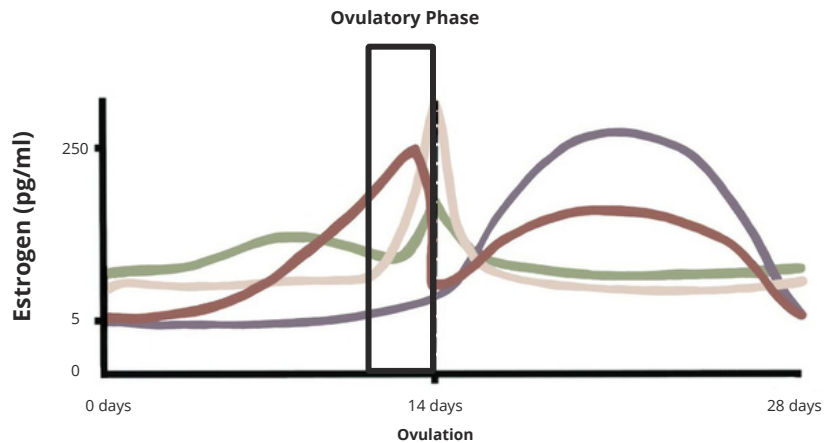


What's Happening In Your Body: After your period ends, the follicular phase begins. In your brain, the hypothalamus signals to your pituitary gland right below it to send follicular-stimulating hormone (FSH) to your ovaries to release an egg. To prepare, the egg follicles swell, and estrogen levels rise to start thickening your uterine lining to house that sweet, special egg. Later on in this phase, as you get closer to ovulation (around the middle of your cycle) you'll start to have vaginal secretion that is white or cream in color and its consistency is sticky and tacky.

How You Feel: Typically during this phase your physical energy is on the incline so you are up for new activities, and feel a sense of optimism and creativity. It feels as if you've come out of hibernation and are ready to take on the world.

Food: Focusing on light, fresh foods like fruits and vegetables, lean meats, and using lighter cooking methods like steaming or sauteeing support that light feeling that is present throughout this phase.

Ovulatory Phase (3-4 Days)

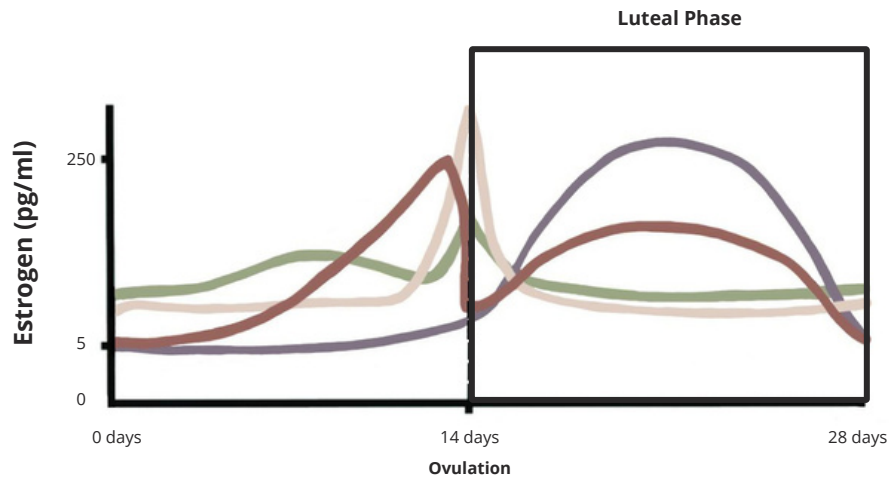


What's Happening In Your Body: The pituitary sends a spike in FSH with an increase in lutenizing hormone (LH) to stimulate one egg follicle to swell and burst. One egg is then released to travel on down to the uterus. Estrogen levels keep rising to work on thickening that uterine lining. You'll also get a surge of testosterone, to encourage that sexual activity, which drops around ovulation. Your vaginal discharge increases throughout this phase and changes to a wet and clear consistency until ovulation day, which is your peak fertility day and happens around day 14 of your cycle.

How Your Feel: This is the phase where we are truly opened up to the world. You typically feel most like connecting with community. You have heightened communication. You'll also look and feel most attractive during this time when estrogen levels heighten, since this is the peak time when your body is telling you to fertilize the egg it worked so hard to release. In other words, you feel most frisky during this time and sex is prominently on the mind. So much so that it exudes from you, making you more magnetic.

Food: You'll want to focus on lighter grains and go easier on carbohydrates but make sure that they're included in meals. They help metabolize and eliminate excess estrogen, which can cause mood swings, acne and other unwanted symptoms. Fruits are great since they are high in antioxidants, especially glutathione, to support liver detoxification and get rid of that estrogen as well. Vegetables to include fiber will also help elimination. Eating these foods raw or steamed is great during this phase.

Luteal Phase (10-14 Days)

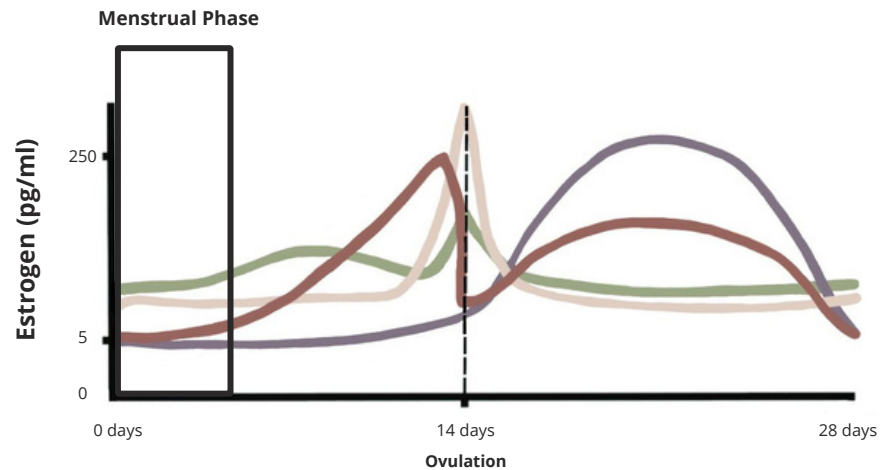


What's Happening In Your Body: Progesterone levels increase and signal to the pituitary gland to stop producing FSH and LH since the egg has already been released and we don't want another one to come down the pipeline yet. Estrogen continues to rise and testosterone will increase towards the end of this phase. Also toward the end of this phase, when the body senses that the egg hasn't been fertilized (as in there will not be a baby), progesterone production stops, which signals the start of your period. This can be a time when you experience pre-menstrual (PMS) symptoms like acne, anxiety or mood swings. Your body may need extra support during this time so remind yourself to take it slow, give yourself grace and be patient as you discover what you need.

How You Feel: Your physical energy declines and you'll find yourself focusing on comfort, awareness and bringing attention to things that you may have overlooked in the past couple weeks. It's a productive time for more detail-oriented tasks and execution on projects. It's a time to slow down and focus.

Food: Foods rich in B vitamins will help promote progesterone production, which are important to help with those mood swings. Getting sufficient calcium and magnesium will help with possible water retention and bloating. Fiber in the form of fruits and vegetables will help eliminate excess estrogen to help with moods. Roasted or baked vegetables and complex carbohydrates will help keep serotonin and dopamine levels stable to also help keep your mind stable.

Menstrual Phase (3-7 Days)



What's Happening In Your Body: Progesterone production drops off, which triggers the shedding of your uterine lining. Estrogen peaks then drops, which signals the hypothalamus to prepare for another cycle of ovulation and try for pregnancy once again! Your energy may be much lower than normal as your body undergoes a demanding process of tearing down the lining it built up over the past month. Give yourself the time and space to let your body go through this process.

How You Feel: Oh, the good old period. I'm sure I don't need to tell you that this is the time when you slow way down and take time to rest and recover. It's a time for relaxation but it's also an amazing time for self-analysis and taking stock of where you are, where you want to go and what needs to change. This is when you do your most balanced thinking between your mind and your heart. It's when your brain connections are strongest. So take time to explore what you're feeling. If you feel restless, journal and meditate on where that's stemming from and what you can bring about in your life to put you in alignment with who you want to be and where you want to go.

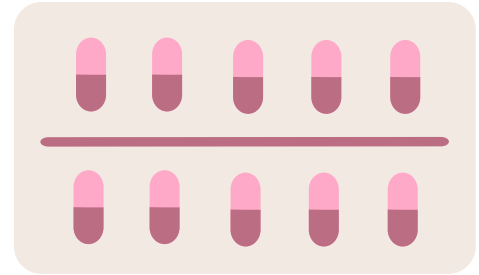
Food: Focus on nutrient-dense foods - your body is undergoing an intense process that requires more key nutrients than usual. Foods like seafood, fruits, vegetables, iron- and zinc-rich foods, and low glycemic foods are great to incorporate. Soups, stews and bone broths are also excellent during this time.

How Hormonal Birth Control Changes Your Natural Cycle

Because HBC uses synthetic hormones, the body doesn't read those hormones the same way it reads the hormones it naturally produces, so there isn't a perfect comparison to what phase HBC keeps you in. But for all intents and purposes, being on HBC most closely mimics the second half of your cycle, or the luteal phase.

I found that while I was on the birth control pill, I was in a constant state of productivity. I could always execute and was extremely detail-oriented. My goals were to succeed and achieve: get that job, get that promotion; excel, excel, excel. Very much aligned with how we generally feel in the luteal phase. And

that's why a lot of women appreciate HBC. They can use it as a tool to accomplish what they want to achieve in their lives without having to worry about hormonal fluctuations or getting pregnant. It comes with its own set of sacrifices, but we are all allowed to choose the lives we want.

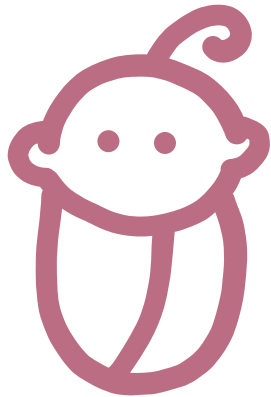


You might notice that this "do, do, do" mentality is a more masculine in nature. This is because the majority of synthetic progestins used in HBC are made from testosterone (Hill, 2019). And because of that, they'll bind to testosterone receptors in your body in addition to progesterone receptors. So you may feel less in your feminine body on HBC. Again, to each their own. Some women prefer that. But I would much rather feel my feminine spirit fly free and be in a natural balance with my masculine qualities.

Natural Fertility Tracking Methods

I completely understand that there is an upfront cost to learn about your body and it's a ton of effort versus just taking a pill every day or shoving an IUD up your vagina for a few years and not worrying about it. But learning about your body and its natural rhythm is how you connect to it. It's how you nurture your body and begin a relationship with it. It's how you grow love for yourself. It's utterly fulfilling to connect with your body's deep intelligence. You understand what it feels like to truly embody what it means to be a

woman and just how fucking magical that is.



One thing you should know is that **you can only get pregnant about 6 days out of the month (Hill, 2019)**. So the fact that we are taking a pill every day is beyond me. Since spermies can survive up to 5 days in the reproductive tract, there's a chance during those days right before ovulation and the day of ovulation for them to fertilize the egg and get you preggers. In other words, **you need to have sex within 24 hours of ovulation or about 5 days beforehand if you want to get pregnant**. But once

ovulation is over, that window is closed and the egg is no longer viable, so it will be shed with your uterine lining when your period comes.

There are a ton of options for natural birth control that you can experiment with to see what works best for you. Below is my short list. These are my favorites and the methods that I find to be the most effective, the simplest and the ones worth the investment of either time and/or money.

Fertility Awareness Method (FAM): When done right, this is the most effective way to track your cycle. It takes a good amount of time and effort upfront to learn and build the habit of tracking diligently every day but if done correctly can be upwards of 99% effective. I recommend the book, ***Taking Charge of Your Fertility* by Toni Weschler**, which is the Bible when it comes to the FAM method. You'll track

your temperature, cervical fluid consistency, and your cervix location in a very impressive chart. It's incredibly thorough and a wonderful way to go deep in getting to know your body (pun intended).



Oura + Natural Cycles: This is my personal favorite. Natural Cycles has previously been similar to Daysy (noted below) in that it is a thermometer used to take your basal body

temperature every morning. The app is powered by an algorithm so when you sync the device with the app, your temperature is recorded and the app provides information on where you are in your cycle, predicting what your fertility status is. The best part about Natural Cycles is it can now be paired with the Oura ring, which is a sleep and activity tracker that measures your body temperature while you sleep. So now you don't even have to think about taking your temperature first thing in the morning. All you have to do is sync the apps when you wake up and Natural Cycles will process Oura's temperature readings to determine your fertility status! It's a bit of an investment upfront with the cost of the Oura ring, the Oura membership and the annual Natural Cycles subscription but well worth the investment to track your cycle with minimal effort. Plus, the Oura ring is an incredible device to track sleep, which you'll learn more about.

Daysy: Similar to Natural Cycles, Daysy is a simple thermometer that takes about 3 months to learn your cycle as you take your temperature every morning. After it takes your temperature, it gives you a red, yellow or green light. You can change what this light means based on your goal. So if your goal is to avoid pregnancy, a green light means you are safe to have sex, red light means sex is a no-go and yellow means there is a risk for pregnancy. The more it learns, the more accurately it is able to predict your fertility status.

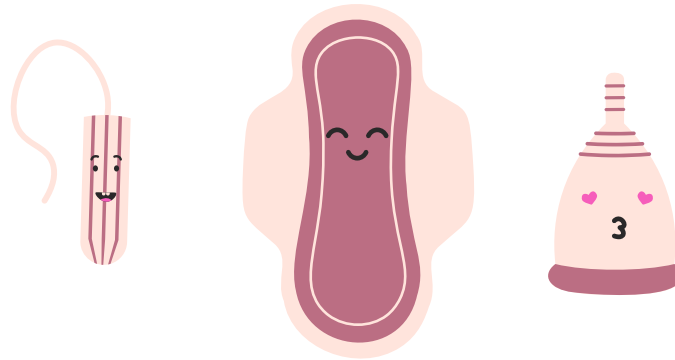
Copper IUD: This is an acceptable option for women who have busy, demanding lives, who find it way too overwhelming to track their cycles and who do not prefer to welcome their bodies' monthly bleed. It's not hormonal, which is great but it is shoving a foreign piece of metal into your body and keeping it there for years. Our sensitive reproductive tract experiences blunt trauma not only by the pain of insertion but of constantly working against this piece of metal for years on end. I think it's the best option if you really can't bear to take the time and effort to connect with your body but I think women sell themselves short when they choose not to connect with their bodies' natural patterns.

A Note on Feminine Care Products

Be very careful about the products you use! **Most popular brands contain toxic substances like rayon, chlorine, fragrance, BPA, colorants, bleach, polyurethane**

and more. Since we're inserting these products into a highly sensitive, highly absorbent part of our bodies, we sure as hell do not need anything else disrupting our hormones—especially when that's exactly what we're trying to avoid as we transition off HBC.

Medical grade silicone menstrual cups or discs are also fantastic options! And if you're a fan of tampons and pads, look for 100% organic cotton and nothing else. Scrutinize every product and its manufacturer. I know it sounds paranoid but companies get away with sneaking far too many things into their products that end up in our bodies, whether it be intentional or not.



Next Steps

- 1 **Reflect on each phase of your natural cycle.** Familiarize yourself with them and how you can best support each. Revisit this section as you transition off HBC. Consider how you feel and what your body needs during each phase.
- 2 **Choose the natural fertility tracking method best for you.** Consider each option as well as its benefits and drawbacks. Try one or try multiple to find what suits your lifestyle.
- 3 **Overhaul your feminine care products.** Clear out the products that contain toxic chemicals and stock up on the products that will make your period clean and free from hormone disruptors.



Week Three

Eating for Your Cycle

Eating for your cycle is one of the most important part of your transition off hormonal birth control. It's also one of the most challenging. I fully understand just how hard it is to "eat healthy." We think we know what it means. We think it means endless salads and vegetables, never feeling satisfied, always hungry and cranky because people have convinced us that we must deprive ourselves to be healthy.

Well, I have zero desire to deprive myself and zero desire to have a complicated relationship with food. So, I'm going to simplify this and give you what you need to know to support your body with food.

The Ground Rules

First are the six rules you should use as a filter for every single food you put into your body. These are the very foundation of the foods you should choose to eat. This doesn't mean you need to overhaul your diet. There are always healthier choices to substitute that will support your body instead of tearing it down.

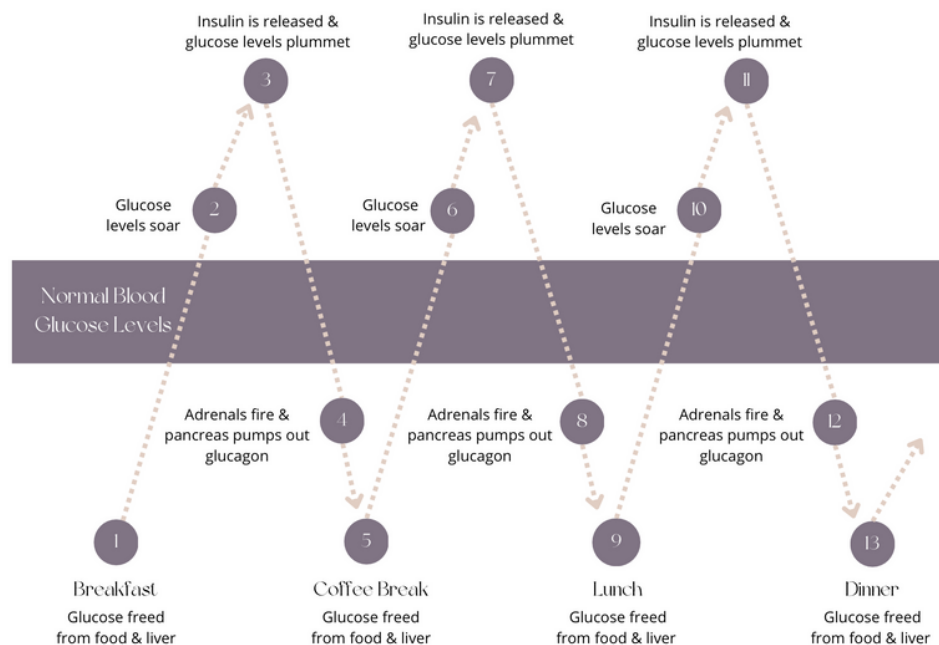


1. **Avoid processed foods:** read every ingredient and make sure it is something you recognize or, at the very least, has minimal unrecognizable ingredients.
2. **Avoid toxic vegetable and seed oils:** these oils are highly toxic to the body and cause a great deal of inflammation at the cellular level that leads to chronic disease.
3. **Avoid high processed sugar foods:** there is an absurd number of names disguised for sugar hidden in all foods, not just sweet treats. Sugar causes extreme spikes in blood sugar and contributes to inflammation.
4. **Eat healthy fats and do not be afraid of them:** healthy fats are required for optimal hormone production and function. So as you get off HBC, you need these fats to support the production of your body's natural hormones.
5. **Eat high quality protein from happy animals:** protein is made up of amino acids, which are the building blocks of our cells. Many of our key hormones, including serotonin, human growth hormone and insulin, are built from chains of amino acids, so it's vital that we get enough high-quality protein.
6. **Eat a variety of foods to get a variety of macro and micronutrients required by**

your body: there are over 40 essential nutrients that are required for the body to consume *daily* to function optimally. Many micronutrients are found in plants and animals so the more nutrient-dense foods we eat every day and the greater the variety, the more nutrients we consume and the better we are able to support what our bodies need.

Your Liver & Blood Sugar Regulation

Next, the two biggest things you'll want to make sure you get right that are required to transition off HBC without resurfacing underlying symptoms are balancing your blood sugar and supporting your liver. Your liver plays a crucial role in both blood sugar regulation and hormone regulation. But the body prioritizes blood sugar management. So when your blood sugar wildly spikes and dips throughout the day, your liver is very busy and in a state of panic as it rushes to release or store glucose to keep your blood sugar levels stable.



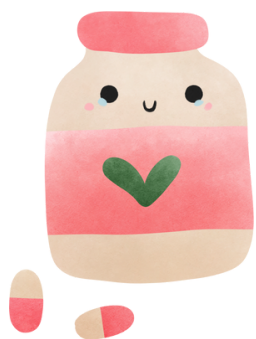
There is a ton that goes into blood sugar dysregulation but you can support it by focusing your meals on protein and healthy fats. And the carbohydrates you do eat should be mainly fruits, vegetables or properly prepared whole grains. This means the grains you eat are soaked and sprouted beforehand. This also means doing your best to limit simple sugar foods because generally speaking, carbohydrates break down into glucose (a.k.a.

blood sugar). So when you eat a meal that is all pasta, that's all going to be broken down as sugar and will give you those spikes and drops, putting your body in a state of stress as it brings blood sugar levels back to normal. Wild blood sugar spikes are what make you feel angry, fatigued and anxiety-ridden all within a matter of hours.

So what does this have to do with your cycle? Well, the liver is important in eliminating excess estrogen. And excess estrogen can cause all kinds of issues including, but not limited to, acne, anxiety and mood swings. We need the liver not to be preoccupied and stressed, in a constant state of emergency. It's a sensitive organ. We need it to be able to do its job well so we can have a beautiful experience during our cycle and especially as we transition off HBC, we need it to be able to step back into its normal role.

How HBC Impacts Nutrition

Hormonal birth control depletes key nutrients that are required for our bodies to function properly. When we're taking these medications for long periods of time without supporting the nutritional deficiencies, it takes a toll on our bodies. You can think of it like this: **the goal of your body is to keep you alive, so when it doesn't have all the resources it needs, it borrows from other places that may not be as crucial to survival.** It prioritizes certain processes and organs over others. Over time, after borrowing from places on a regular basis, things start to break down. That's when you get inflammation, which turns into system dysfunction and chronic disease.



I know we all love the idea of supplements as an easy way to get the nutrients we need, but be wary. Vitamins and minerals in foods are found in forms that make them easily recognizable by the body. They are also naturally paired with cofactors that allow them to be absorbed more easily. A lot of supplements can be a waste of money or even cause some receptors in our bodies to become insensitive to the nutrients we need. Personally, I do take supplements and believe

supplements can be beneficial and necessary given the amount of nutrients in our soils has been depleted, but it's very dependent on which supplements you choose and their

quality. Fillers, sugars and other chemicals can be hidden in supplements that end up doing more harm than good. That's why we always read ingredients and why I'll always recommend food first.

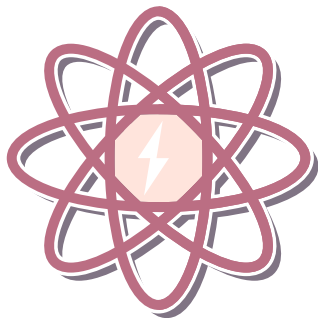
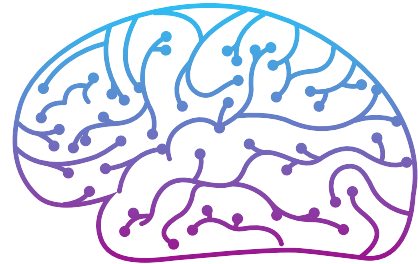
These are the most common nutrients that are depleted or dysregulated by HBC and how they affect us. Before you stop taking HBC, the best way to prepare and support your body is to eat more foods that are rich in these nutrients!

Magnesium

Why It's Important: Required by every cell in the body for energy, involved in over 300 processes and could be as much as 3,000 processes, required for detoxification of hormones like estrogen, required for muscle activity and nerve impulses, supports mental cognition and mood, modulates stress hormones, regulates blood pressure and body temperature,

needed for DNA production and function, modulates electrical potential across cell membranes (which allow for nutrients to pass in and out of cells)

Foods: dark chocolate, parsley, zucchini, kale, cucumber, flax seeds, asparagus, broccoli, sauerkraut, kale, chard, brown rice, avocado



B1 (Thiamin):

Why It's Important: Helps break down and metabolize fats for ATP synthesis (ATP is the energy used by every cell in the body), helps metabolize glucose to maintain blood sugar regulation, helps break down histamine and estrogen, nerves and their protective coating require B1

Foods: pork, trout, salmon, tuna, chicken, sweet potato, yogurt, beans and lentils, whole grains, cheddar cheese

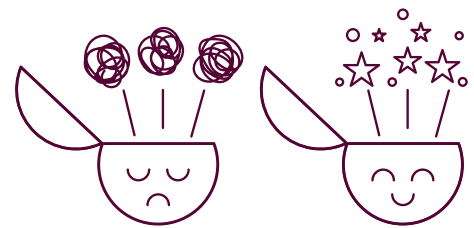
B2 (Riboflavin)

Why It's Important: Enables the body to break down fat, protein and carbs for maintaining energy, helps convert carbohydrates to ATP, required in higher levels for burning fat compared to glucose

Foods: liver, eggs, asparagus, zucchini, milk, broccoli, cottage cheese, parsley, kale, cucumber

B6 (Pyridoxine)

Why It's Important: Cofactor for GABA and serotonin (play key roles in balancing moods), most involved in protein metabolism but is crucial in using energy from all your macronutrients (i.e. fat, protein, carbohydrates), cofactor for 100+ enzymes in the body (mostly having to do with metabolism), helps synthesize and breakdown hormones including estrogen, aids in sleep by regulating tryptophan (which is a precursor to melatonin production), helps manage inflammation



Foods: green peppers, zucchini, russet potato, turkey, avocado, garlic, beef liver, cauliflower, sauerkraut, wild-caught salmon, sweet potato, banana,

B9 (Folate)

Why It's Important: plays a key role in methylation (process responsible for neurotransmitter synthesis, detoxification), needed for hormone balance, required for cell division, works with vitamin B12 and vitamin C to breakdown and use proteins

Foods: liver, egg yolk, shrimp, oysters, cod, lettuce, asparagus, avocados, parsley, beets, citrus, broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, kimchi

B12 (Cobalamin)

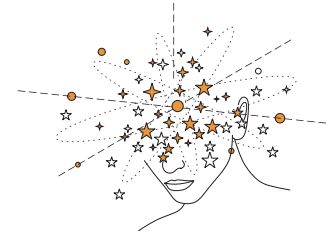
Why It's Important: Involved in process of methylation to produce neurotransmitters (happy mood, detoxification, energy), cofactor for GABA and serotonin, involved in the

metabolism of every cell in the body (B12 is required to make energy for cells to use), helps balance inflammation

Foods: exclusively produced by bacteria in animals' microbiome so solely found in animal foods: meat, poultry, dairy, eggs, seafood

Zinc

Why It's Important: Cofactor for 200+ enzymatic reactions in the body, crucial for digestive and immune health, protects the brain from inflammation and toxicity, required for neurotransmitter synthesis, essential to produce stomach acid, essential for skin and bone integrity, important to synthesize cholesterol, fats and proteins



Foods: oysters, crab, crawfish, shrimp, beef, beef liver, eggs, parsley, asparagus, broccoli

Selenium

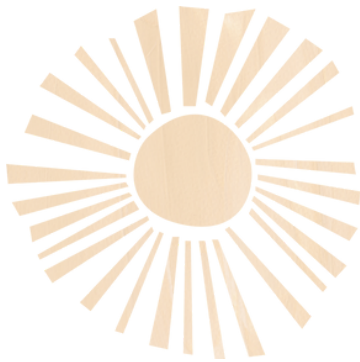
Why It's Important: Converts T4 thyroid hormone to its active form, T3, to be used by the body, plays an antioxidant role as it is required to produce glutathione (the body's master antioxidant), used to create proteins that protect against cell damage

Foods: pork, beef liver, chicken, eggs, milk, shrimp, salmon, sardines, brazil nuts, bacon, cashews, spinach, asparagus, mushrooms, broccoli, garlic, flax seeds, kale, sauerkraut, oysters

Copper

Why It's Important: helps protect cells from oxidative damage, metabolizes fat, needed for cognition and nerve signaling, required for neurotransmitter synthesis (like dopamine), needed to absorb and transport iron, required for enzymes related to energy production

Foods: liver, heart, kidney, oysters, crab, shrimp, salmon, kale, asparagus, sauerkraut, turmeric, parsley, green peppers, dark chocolate, swiss chard



Vitamin D

Why It's Important: regulates cell growth, reduces inflammation, normalizes mood, works with vitamin A to boost immune system, plays a key role in bone reabsorption and remodeling, helps with glucose metabolism

Foods: spinach, blackberries, kale, raspberries, mushrooms, mackerel, salmon, sardines, milk, eggs, turmeric, cinnamon

Vitamin C

Why It's Important: Cofactor for B vitamins, required for proper immune function (vitamin C is antiviral, antifungal, and antibacterial), needed for new tissue growth, has detoxifying properties, protects against cell damage, required to convert cholesterol into bile acids which help break down dietary fats

Foods: kale, broccoli, parsley, green peppers, cauliflower, cabbage, citrus fruits, zucchini, raspberries, sweet potato, asparagus

Vitamin E

Why It's Important: Antioxidant that protects cells and tissues from damage, required for proper immune function, antioxidant properties protect the brain from inflammation and damage

Foods: sunflower seeds, hazelnuts, peanuts, pecans, almonds, olive oil, tomato, avocado, asparagus, broccoli, kale, parsley, shrimp, raspberries, blueberries, sweet potato



A Note on Alcohol & Caffeine

I am never going to tell you not to consume something you enjoy on occasion (except toxic oils, those I will not hesitate to ban from your diet), but I want you to consider a couple points on alcohol and caffeine and their impact on your sweet liver as you go through this transition. First, as you are likely well aware, alcohol has a significant impact

on your liver. Just another one of the 500+ jobs your liver takes care of: detoxification. Like I mentioned before, the higher burden we put on our livers, the less it will be able to do its



jobs optimally, including storing nutrients, removing excess estrogen and producing cholesterol to create hormones. **The process of metabolizing alcohol is nutrient-demanding. And when our body is already in a state of depletion from HBC, it has even fewer resources to give.**

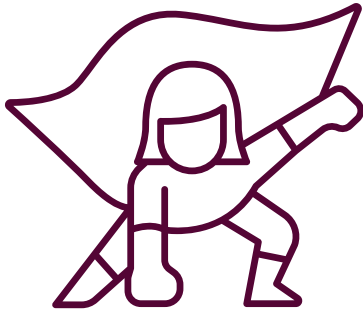
During these 8 weeks as you get to know your body, I would advise you to limit alcohol. If it's something like a glass of wine you look forward to every day, try to cut it to half a glass. Just until your body gets back on track. **I want this transition to be as clear and seamless as possible for you, with a limited number of compounding factors. I want you to be able to easily identify the underlying root cause and how your body is responding to the changes it's going through.**

Now caffeine. I am not against caffeine. What I am against is caffeine for breakfast and anything over one cup per day. It's the dependency that I am against. Caffeine has a huge impact on blood sugar levels. We also become dependent on it for energy when we have extreme dips in blood sugar, causing fatigue, especially mid-afternoon.



Before you have your first cup of coffee, drink one glass of water and have breakfast that is centered around protein and healthy fats. If you find that you need to rebalance your blood sugar, including a small portion of healthy carbohydrates in the form of fruits, vegetables or whole grains can be beneficial as you go through that process. But breakfast is necessary for your body to replenish itself and consume nutrients so that it can metabolize your caffeine while maintaining normal blood sugar levels so you don't need another four cups just to get through the day. Caffeine is another substance, just

like alcohol, that can cloud your connection with your body, so beware. If you can't give it up, make sure you are being intentional with how your body feels and pay close attention to what it may need during your transition off HBC.



How To Eat Healthy

Only you can make healthy food choices. It's freaking hard, I know. It's hard to be consistent. It gets boring and it takes effort. But that's all it is: consistency. Keep your "why" statement close as you navigate how you move forward with eating for your cycle. Remember to start small with your new habit. Start with thing you consume every day. Make it as healthy as possible. If you need to plan out your meals, do it. If you need to clear out your fridge or your pantry, take the time to do it.

I've included an example grocery list for you and a few sources for healthy, clean and tasty recipes that are perfect for supporting your cycle!

Try to make it fun, this is a good thing! You are taking care of your body with deep intention. There is no greater love than that.

Next Steps

- 1 Use the ground rules as a filter for everything you put into your body.** Clear out your kitchen of any food products that don't follow the rules. On your next visit to the grocery store, only choose foods that meet the ground rules standards.
- 2 Reflect on your eating habits.** Do you need to make a schedule? Would it work best for you to meal prep a few lunches or dinners for the week? Do you need to re-evaluate the groceries you are buying? Do you need to limit eating out? Do you need to research healthy recipe and substitute options to get ideas flowing?
- 3 Support your liver, balance blood sugar regulation and nourish your body with nutrients depleted by HBC: magnesium, B vitamins, vitamin D, E, C, selenium, zinc, copper.** Focus on limiting processed foods, simple sugars and aim to include foods from the lists from each key nutrient in at least one meal every day this week.
- 4 Track your daily and weekly alcohol and caffeine intake.** Is there a way for you to make adjustments to support your transition? If it's too overwhelming to change your alcohol and/or caffeine intake now, make a note to revisit this habit change as you progress.
- 5 Track your food intake every day this week.** List the amount, the quality and how you feel before and after eating. Pay attention to your digestion and bring awareness to any patterns that might be revealed.



Week Four

Sleeping for Your Cycle

Next is getting your sleep right, and it is vitally important.

Sleep is your savior. There is a reason humans have maintained the need to be offline for eight hours every day as we've evolved. It's a time the body can reset, clean up, recover and recharge. It's when we process our memories and our emotions. We like to test it because we're strapped for time. We test how many hours of sleep we can live without. And we can get away with less to a certain extent. But it will always catch up with us. Lack of sleep causes metabolic consequences (Depner et al, 2020) and affects our energy, our moods, our relationships, our immune system function, our bodies' ability to remove toxins. It's one of the single biggest game changers you can optimize in your life. But you have to prioritize it and that's not easy.

Sleep is the restorative time that your body requires daily to regenerate. And during this time of change and adjustment to its natural rhythm, sleep is a crucial part of a seamless transition. Coming off hormonal birth control will signal to your body to restart processes that were suppressed. It may have been years since these processes have been quiet. So it's taxing for the body to readjust and reprogram itself. **I cannot stress enough how important sleep is to your transition and to how you will feel throughout it.**



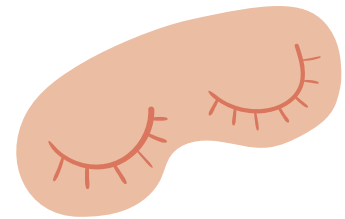
Below are guidelines to help you make sleep a priority. The goal is to make it as simple as possible but it has to be taken seriously. Remember your "why." Remember that your body needs you to honor its needs. Remember that sleep is one of the keys to unlocking the deep connection you'll have to your body and soul.



- **Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day.**

Your body's circadian rhythm governs its ability to produce the right hormones at the right time to restore itself optimally. When we give our body a reliable schedule, it adapts and it will work for us to the best of its ability.

- **Set your wake and sleep times 9 hours apart.** You need at least 7 hours of sleep per night (Watson et al, 2015) but you do not sleep the full time you are in bed. If you need to wake up at 7am, aim to be in bed ready for sleep by 10pm. The hours before midnight are the most important hours for deep sleep, which is critical for physiological repair.
- **Make your room as dark as possible.** Use black out curtains to cover windows. Use a sleep mask. Remove plug-in night lights or electronics that have a light.
- **Turn down the temperature.** Set the temperature to 65-69 degrees Fahrenheit. We sleep best in cool temperatures.
- **Aim for no screens at least 1 hour before sleep.** But if you must, change the color settings on your devices to the warmest color settings. If you have the option, **change the colors on your phone to red.** Download the **f.lux** app on your computer and use the warmest setting possible.
- **Aim to eat your last meal at the least 2 hours before you plan to go to sleep.** We do not want to have our bodies digesting while it should be clearing out toxins and processing experiences and emotions.
- **Dim your lights starting at least 3 hours before bed.** This will support melatonin production.
- **Start winding down 3 hours before bed.** Do more relaxing activities instead of things that cause stress and increase your heart rate. We want cortisol to be low and melatonin to be high. This will make it easier for you to fall, and stay, asleep throughout the night.
- **(Optional) Use a device to track your sleep.** As I mentioned, I am a diehard Oura ring user but there are other good ones, like the Whoop band. The Oura ring tracks everything about your sleep: the total time you were in bed, how long you were asleep, how long it took you to fall asleep, your resting heart rate, your heart rate variability, plus when and how long you were in each stage (awake, light sleep, deep sleep, REM sleep). Taking into account all those factors, plus your temperature, activity level and more, Oura (and other devices, generally) give you a daily sleep score to gauge how well you slept and what you may need to change to improve it. I cannot recommend it enough!



Next Steps

1 Before adjusting your sleep schedule, track your normal routine for 2-3 days **this week**. Bring awareness to what time you get into bed, how long it takes for you to fall asleep and what time you wake up. Note how you feel when you wake up each day, how the quality of your sleep felt and if you woke up during the night.

2 For the rest of the week, try some of, or all, of the suggestions listed above to **find what works best for you**. There is no need to put pressure on yourself to have perfect sleep. Focus on small improvements. Find a sleep schedule and routine that helps you get the deepest sleep possible. Remember, sleep needs to be prioritized during your transition!



Week Five

Stress Management

Stress

Next, we have to address our good friend, stress. We all have it and most of us get knocked over the head with it like a constant wave of dread. We have to build a relationship with stress. Stress is merely our body trying to protect itself. It's sending a message to us with its only goal being survival. Stress can be good for us, the whole "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger" bit. It's true. But chronic stress can be damaging to our minds and bodies.

Stress is incredibly taxing on the body. Most notable: the stress response is prioritized over digestion. **Digestion requires the body to be in a state of rest to do its job properly by breaking down and absorbing the nutrients we need.** During this time especially, we need the right nutrients for our bodies to function properly as they reset to natural hormone production. Over time, improper digestion can lead to intestinal permeability, food sensitivities, allergies and chronic inflammation down the line, which can further complicate the transition off HBC.



Chronic and prolonged stress also affects blood sugar regulation and can cause inflammation. It can be the underlying cause of insulin resistance, metabolic disorders and mood disorders, like anxiety and depression. It can affect our ability to break down fats, which affects hormone balance and the body's ability to manage inflammation. It is also a minerally expensive process that depletes key nutrients including zinc, magnesium and calcium.

Stress and the hormones that are involved also get prioritized over other processes, including sex hormone production and our cycles. If our body is in a state of stress, it will prioritize survival over procreation. **In other words, stress causes the body to steal energy, nutrients and other resources that would be used for normal ongoing processes, like our menstrual cycles.**

So, you need to find the way to manage stress that works best for you. You may already have a good idea of what works, maybe it's a hard workout, maybe it's a quiet walk, maybe it's spending quality time laughing with the people you love. Those are all fabulous. But there is one thing that you must do when stress comes to visit:

You must sit with it.

You don't have to sit with it in the very moment it appears, especially if you're under a time crunch or can't spare the emotional energy. But at some point, stress needs to be confronted and understood. You need to feel your way through it and ask it questions:

- What is it trying to tell me?
- When was the moment that it was triggered?
- How did I feel when it came on?
- What happened in my body when it came up?
- How did I deal with it?
- How could I have dealt with it?



Managing stress isn't just about making the feeling subside. It's about understanding and communicating with your mind and your body. It's about feeling through what is happening. It's something to be carefully waded through. It needs to be nurtured and held.

When stress is understood and we know where it's coming from and why it's there, we can engage with it in a kind and loving way. We can also give it boundaries. We can welcome it and say, "Oh, there you are. So nice of you to visit again, but right now isn't a good time. Can you come back in later?" **Instead of fighting our stresses, which causes them to fight harder to be heard, if we take the time to listen and acknowledge them, they settle.**

That may sound silly, my personification of stress, but building a relationship with stress

changes everything. There will still be moments when it overwhelms us, but treating it as something of value, as a message worth listening to, makes it manageable. On top of that, we learn to trust the stress and what it's telling us. And in doing so, we learn to trust ourselves more.

Here are some ideas to help welcome the stress and balance it out:

- Deep breathing
- Meditation
- Walking
- Stretching
- Reading
- Sitting in a quiet room for at least 5 minutes
- Exercising (especially strength training)
- Doing something that brings you joy (a fun TV show, creating art, redecorating, spending time with friends, family)



Movement



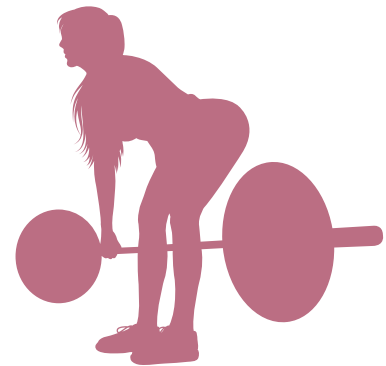
The most impactful method for manhandling stress is movement. It does not mean strenuous exercise every day. It can be as simple as a 30 minute walk, 10 minutes of stretching or dancing to your favorite song. It can even be standing during the work day. The point is to move your body, and it needs to be done daily.

Your lymphatic system, the one that is key for immune system function, is similar to the circulatory system in that there are lymphatic pathways throughout your body just as there are veins and blood vessels. But while blood is circulated by the heart pumping, the lymph (or the fluid within the lymphatic system) only moves when you do. **So in order for nutrients and cells to get to where they need to go, we need to make sure we're moving our bodies.**

Once you are moving daily with either stretching or walking, aim to incorporate intentional exercise into your routine. If this is a new habit for you, aim for one day a week. Then increase it to twice a week. Aim for at least 3 times per week of intentional exercise that is more challenging than a leisurely stroll around the block. Start with a brisk walk. Challenge yourself. Do not hesitate to start small and celebrate small wins.

Remember, small wins are important. They compound and lead to bigger wins. Do not underestimate the small wins. I highly recommend strength training, especially if you're looking to strengthen your mental health. When you find out you can lift heavy things with your body, your mind translates that to your ability to overcome other obstacles in your life.

I know going to a gym and lifting weights is intimidating. Trust me, we all started there and felt the exact same way. And no one is an expert. For example, I do 3 main lifts: squats, deadlifts and hip thrusts (I hate upper body). All you need to do is learn a few exercises to get started and to start feeling strong. Here's a secret: if you go in there and pretend like you know exactly what you're doing, no one will pay any attention to you. Everyone is preoccupied with their own exercises and they are not spending any time judging you. Promise.



If you have a friend who could show you a few exercises, ask them. They would love to help you learn. If you don't have someone to show you the ropes, book a session with a personal trainer and ask them to show you. Sometimes you can find personal trainers who are starting out who will give you a free session or there might be a free trial session you can take advantage of with your gym. Do some research—you can do it!

You also don't need a crazy regimen. In fact, over-exercising can do more harm than good and bring more stress on your body. **When chronically stressed, either mentally or physically, women's bodies may stop menstruating altogether. And we definitely do not want that. It is more beneficial to go to the gym, do a few exercises and leave.**

You don't have to leave sore and exhausted.

If you get bored with the same old thing every time, change your variety throughout the week. Try yoga, running, join a sports league, swimming, Crossfit if that's your jam (though be careful with balancing the over-exertion). There's something for everyone. The most important thing is to find something you love doing and that you look forward to. For me, once I connected how lifting weights improved my mental health and moods ten fold, I was hooked and I won't miss days because of it. It's something I enjoy and I know it's something that will be worth it.



Remember, be patient with yourself. This shit is hard.

Focus on tracking what you're eating, how you're moving, how you're sleeping and how you're feeling. If you miss a day of moving, it is not the end of the world and you will still be setting yourself up for success to come off HBC. Just focus on taking care of your body. You have already made the decision that you are someone who cares about their health by getting started. Keep going. You can do it.

Journaling

Journaling is completely optional but it can be incredibly therapeutic while transitioning off HBC and getting to know yourself again as your hormones reset. It's also the easiest habit to fall back on when you're at a loss for what to do.

There may be times as your hormone levels normalize and as you reacquaint yourself with who you are not on HBC when you're completely overwhelmed. You may be emotional and you don't know why. You may feel sad, angry, confused, uncomfortable in your own body. You may snap at the people closest to you for no apparent reason. You may feel like you're doing everything right: eating well, exercising regularly, sleeping soundly—so why in the world are you feeling so shitty?



This is where journaling comes in. It's the best tool for working through your own shit. If you prefer to talk it out with someone else, absolutely do that. But I still recommend journaling because it's the best way for you to communicate and connect with yourself.



As I've drilled into your brain by now, when you get off HBC, your hormones change and your personality changes with it. So you have to get to know yourself again throughout this process. **You need to explore who are, what you think, what you need. The best way to do that is to talk to yourself through writing. You clarify what you feel and you uncover who you are at your core.** You can dig in, you can ask yourself questions, you can start to understand yourself and give

yourself what you need. Make it a stream of consciousness. It doesn't have to make sense. It doesn't have to be pretty. It's just you talking to you, sorting through your thoughts and feelings, your fears and anxieties, your sorrows and tears.

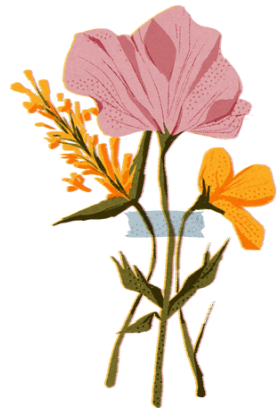
The catch is that journaling must be done without judgment. Write down everything. And I mean everything. When you're in those trying moments and you're at a loss for what to do and how to make yourself feel better, write. Even the most shameful thought or feeling that is visiting you. Write it down. Release it. Don't worry if you think you sound selfish, bitter, immature, naive. It doesn't matter. Because you're being vulnerable and raw with yourself. And when you do this, you are building trust with yourself. You are building a relationship with yourself that is the foundation for who you are.



This is important because when you learn that you can trust yourself, you grow love for yourself. You become confident in who you are because you know that you can

hold space for yourself and that you have your own back. No one else can take that away from you. And that sets the tone for every relationship in your life. Without the foundation of you knowing exactly who you are and understanding yourself, your foundation will be weak and so will all your other relationships.

Coming off HBC is an important time to reconnect with your soul, your true self, your wild woman ways. It's a freaking magical time when you are allowed to be reborn as a woman. You are exploring your body, your mind and your spirit. You are getting to know your true self.



Journaling is not something that needs to be regimented. This is a tool for you to use whenever you need it. I journaled daily. Multiple times per day, especially on those days when I felt weakest and ripped apart by my emotions.

Just talk to yourself. Sit with yourself. Get to know yourself. You are magical. You are going through an amazing change.

Next Steps

- 1 Reflect on your relationship with stress.** When do you feel the most stressed? How do you tend to handle it? What do you think it is trying to tell you? Explore these thoughts to begin creating a relationship with stress that works for you, not against you.
- 2 Choose 2-3 techniques (deep breathing, meditation, reading, etc.) that resonate with you to fall back on when stress comes to visit.** When you're feeling stressed, pick one of these to help you work with it until it passes. Fill this list with things that you enjoy and that are easy to remember when stress overwhelms your mind.
- 3 Set a weekly movement schedule with at least one movement built in per day (like the example below).** If you are just starting out, schedule one 10-30 minute walk per day, or a 10 minute stretching session. Then do it. Follow that schedule for 2 weeks, then begin adding intentional exercise activities. Start with adding one day of exercise and build up to at least 3 days.
- 4 (Optional) Test out journaling.** Write what's on your mind. Write how you feel. Make it a stream of consciousness, without any pressure or structure. It's a tool that can be anything you want it to be. It's simply for you to get to know your soul.

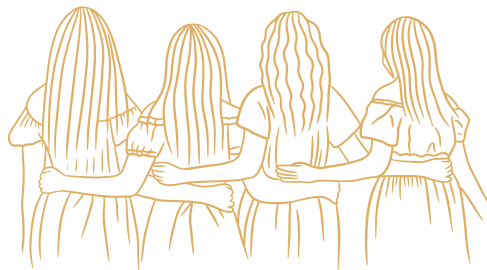
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Walk	Walk	Train	Walk	Train	Walk	Train

Week Six

Social Support & Setting Expectations

This week is about setting expectations as you transition off hormonal birth control. You will set expectations with the people in your life: your family, your friends, your romantic partner, your pets. And most importantly, you will set expectations with yourself.

This is important not only to create space and grace for yourself but also to have others keep an objective eye on you. **Sometimes it's hard for us to discern if our behavior has changed. It's especially difficult when we're dealing with hormones. Sometimes changes in our hormones and personalities can happen so gradually that we don't even notice.** We might think life is just getting more challenging, our jobs more stressful and maybe we even feel like we've always felt the way that we do. But others have a clearer view and can lend an important perspective. Tracking our moods and how our bodies feel will also help provide evidence that maybe what we're feeling isn't so normal for us. Maybe those aspects of our lives haven't changed at all. Maybe it's us that has changed.



For The People In Your Life

You don't have to tell everyone (or anyone, if you prefer) that you have decided to make this change to transition off HBC. But I would recommend telling at least one person. Maybe the person you trust the most, who knows you deeply. Sit them down and ask them to keep an eye on you and any changes in your behavior that they notice. It would be nice for you to have someone who has your back so that you don't have to carry the full burden of this. Especially when your body will be changing and you will be intensely focused on nurturing yourself.

Let your people know that you will be more focused on yourself and your body. Let them know that there's a chance you might be more reserved, temperamental or emotional than usual as your body relearns its natural rhythm.

For Yourself

Give yourself time and grace to feel how you feel. Try to welcome any emotions that may come up: fear, anxiety, loneliness, freedom, loss, anger, grief, joy. Whatever it may be, try to sit with it and feel it, and then let it go. It is said that it takes 7 seconds for our brains and bodies to process an emotion. Try to give whatever comes up those 7 small seconds. Try not to let any emotion take control over you. Be curious. Try to understand what the emotion may be telling you about yourself and what you may need.



Set the expectation that you don't have to transition quickly or correctly. There is no right or wrong way to transition off HBC because you are the only one who knows exactly what your body needs.

Prepare yourself that there's a possibility that you might feel worse for a couple days before you start to feel better as the body rights itself. This is called a Jarisch-Herxheimer reaction, or a healing reaction.

Let yourself feel through the process without expectation and remember why you've decided to make this change for yourself.

A Note on Doctor Consultations

As an optional step, consult a doctor to give yourself peace of mind. This is something you should definitely consider if you have been diagnosed with a condition such as PCOS, endometriosis, ovarian cysts, or anything else pertaining to the female reproductive system, even prior to being prescribed HBC.

Keep in mind that you are *consulting* with your doctor. **You have complete control over**



what you choose to do with your body. If you trust that your doctor understands your desire to naturally manage your cycle and any underlying symptoms you might have and they support you in that, take advantage of it! You are truly lucky. But generally speaking, most doctors do not have extensive knowledge of how to support the body using food and lifestyle changes. They have extensive knowledge of pharmaceutical options for you. Most also recognize hormonal birth control as a safe and effective drug.

Approach your consultation with a skeptical eye. Ask hard questions. Ask every question you have. Feel empowered to fight for yourself and what you want for your body. No one else.

Next Steps

1 **Set aside time to talk to the people in your life about your journey.** Give yourself the space to talk to them openly and honestly about your decision and how they can support you. Don't be afraid to ask for help, the people who love you will be beyond happy to give it.

2 **Take some time for yourself to deeply consider what you want from your decision to come off HBC.** Level with yourself and remember to give yourself grace through this process. It is a big decision that requires deep work and focus. Give yourself the freedom to be selfish during this time so that you can honor your body and what it needs.

3 **(Optional) Schedule a doctor consultation appointment.** Just remember, this decision is no one's but your own. You are free to decide what your body needs. All you have to do is listen to it and trust what it is telling you.



Stop Taking Hormonal Birth Control!

You're ready!

You've learned how your cycle naturally works and how you can work with your precious hormones to nourish them and give them everything they need for you to feel as fabulous as you are.

You've built sturdy habits that you feel great about and can actually keep! That was the hardest part, in my humble opinion.

You've prepped your people and they are at the ready to lovingly support you if there comes a time when you need someone to lean on.

Most importantly, you've set expectations with yourself. You've promised to give yourself the time, patience and grace to take it one day, one step, one moment at a time to accomplish your goal. You understand your body can react in a variety of ways but you've also done everything you can to support it with love and care.

You've also gotten to know your body in a deeper way so you can now hear and intuit what it's telling you. You reconnected with your innate intelligence and have learned how your mind and body are one, and that they communicate with each other in every moment.

I am so excited for you. You've put the work in, you are dedicated to being your own healer and have taken your health into your own hands. There is nothing more empowering and no greater act of love that you could give yourself.

So, do it! Stop taking that unnecessary hellish fiend!

Part Three

Explore

Week Eight

Observe & Adjust

Congratulations!

You are free from hormonal birth control.

I am so proud of you!

From here on out, give yourself grace as you observe and reconnect with your body. Continue to live by the healthy habits you've woven into your life to support it. Sit with yourself as you navigate the changes your body is making as it resets to its natural rhythm.

Take the time to learn about yourself. Connect with yourself. Ask yourself questions. Learn what's important to you that maybe didn't feel as important before, when you were on HBC. This is a time of exploration. **You're becoming a different version of yourself and the more you can learn about what this version of yourself needs to be happy and healthy, the easier the transition will be.**



Watch yourself, observe exactly how you feel and how you act. Look at yourself from a perspective of curiosity. Learn what your body needs. Learn what your emotions need. Learn what your spirit needs. Learn what you need from your relationships. Learn what you need from yourself.

As you continue your journey through your transition and discover more and more about your body as it settles into its natural cycle, make adjustments to your life. **You are exploring a new version of yourself but you are also building a new life, one that aligns with your deepest self.** It's going to involve some adjustments to your habits as you learn what you need.

Learning about yourself is an investment and it takes time and patience. You learn what works for you only after doing what doesn't work for too long. That's life. We just have to make sure we're bringing our attention to our habits and what we do every day. **We have to take a step back sometimes and ask ourselves if what we're doing is working, or if there's a better way of doing it.** Sometimes we need to put our lives under scrutiny so we can recognize things that may need to change to improve them.

Keep using the Food & Mood Journal, or any other tracking method that suits you, to keep tabs on how your body is feeling. Note any changes in your mood, your appetite, your libido, your energy, your sleep. It's all important. Remember that it will be extremely helpful to look back on if you start to experience a dip in mood or any change in how you're feeling in your body overall.

I know tracking things can be tedious and can fall to the wayside because we're all busy and we get too tired to do tedious things. But don't let it fall. **This change is huge for your body. It's huge for your mind. You're changing who you are as you change your hormones.** Remind yourself of how important it is. Do it for yourself and the person you are striving to become.



Next Steps

The following are questions to start you off on your journey of exploration and experimentation. These are examples of things you can analyze and adjust to better suit your life and your individual needs. Think about each part of your life and do not be afraid to try something new or different that may work better for you!

Tweak Exercise

Are you truly enjoying your exercise of choice? Do you need a wider variety of activities during the week? Do you need a schedule so you don't have to think about it? Do you need to exercise more days in the week? Do you need to rest more? Do you need more challenge? Do you need to start smaller to maintain your habit? Do you need to find a way to reward yourself for doing it? Does your body feel tired and burnt out afterward? Do you need to put more time in between when you eat and when you exercise? Do you need to try exercising at a different time of day?

Tweak Sleep

Do you need more sleep? Do you need less? Do you need to wake up at different time? Do you need to make sure you are in bed before a certain time? Do you need to make your room colder? Warmer? Do you need to decrease screen time to improve sleep quality? Do you need to change your bedding? Do you need to stop eating earlier in the day to improve your sleep? Do you need to dim your lights after sundown to prepare for sleep? Do you need to set an alarm to remind yourself to prepare for sleep? Do you need to find a way to calm your mind to fall asleep? Do you need to have a small snack to balance your blood sugar so that you don't wake up wide awake in the middle of the night?



Tweak Foods

Do you need to adjust your ratio of protein, healthy fats and carbohydrates? Do you need to eat a wider variety of vegetables? Is there a particular food that you suspect is doing your body more harm than good? Is there a food you need to try taking out? Is there a food you need to try adding in? Are you drinking enough water? Are you getting enough electrolytes? Are you having at least one bowel movement per day? What is its consistency? Is your stomach upset after you eat? Are you gassy after you eat? Do you need to eat more often throughout the day while you balance your blood sugar? Do you need to eat less often to feel your best? Are you struggling to eat less sugar? Do you need to find healthier alternatives for foods you love? Are your energy levels stable throughout the day?



Tweak Spiritual Practices

Do you need a spiritual practice that involves being around other like-minded people? Do you need your spiritual practice to be more private? Do you need it to be in a group setting? Do you need it to be in an environment specific to your practice, like a church or temple? Do you need a practice that is once a week or more often? Do you need a spiritual practice at all, or do you need another activity that connects you to your body and soul?

Tweak Mental Health Support

Do you need to consider seeing a therapist? Do you need to journal more often throughout the day to calm your thoughts? Do you need to talk to a friend and be more vulnerable with how you are feeling? Do you need to meditate for shorter periods of time? Longer periods of time? Do you need to practice breathing techniques more often during the day? Do you need to consider taking more magnesium to help with stress? Do you need to spend more time with people closest to you? Do you need to spend less time with people? Do you need a creative outlet to express yourself?

Closing Thoughts

I want to emphasize that the work doesn't end after these 8 weeks. It's a constant process of learning and relearning. **The work is in being consistent.** Not perfect. But consistent. And you can do it. It's hard, but as Glennon Doyle says, "we can do hard things."

It took about 6 months for me before I realized the feeling of being completely free of the effects of HBC. That's when it hit me that my body was back to its natural rhythm. I felt alive. Free. Like this new person I had to get to know. I had to learn what I found joy in, what turned me off, what made me feel sparks and what dulled my fire. **It takes time to get to know your body, to get to know your soul. It takes patience and grace. It takes love and nurturing.**

As I said before, HBC can be useful. It allows women to accomplish their ambitious goals without fear of having to bear a child. But HBC limits us. We can't embrace the full breadth of who we truly are and how we change throughout the month. It's an amazing gift, to be a woman. It's a storm and a desert. It's a peaceful forest and a wild hurricane. **We are multi-dimensional beings. Our personalities are well-rounded and beautiful. It amazes me every day.**



I believe every one of us should have the full experience of
what it means to be a woman.

That's why I created this guide and what I hope for you to experience. Thank you for allowing me to support you on your journey. I wish you nothing but love and light as you continue empowering yourself with the knowledge to be your own source of healing power. ♡

Additional Tools & Resources

Podcast Episodes

- Almost 30 Podcast: Alisa Vitti episode 100
- Almost 30 Podcast: Candace Burch episodes 35, 125
- Almost 30 Podcast: Robert Anderson episode 113
- Joe Rogan Experience: Kelly Brogan episode 968
- Wellness Mama: Jolene Brighten episode 226

Books

Cycle

- WomanCode by Alisa Vitti
- In The Flo by Alisa Vitti
- Taking Charge of Your Fertility by Toni Weschler
- This Is Your Brain on Birth Control by Sarah E. Hill
- Beyond the Pill by Dr. Jolene Brighten

Habits

- Atomic Habits by James Clear
- Better Than Before by Gretchen Rubin

About Me

My health journey began when I was 18 years old and diagnosed with Ulcerative Colitis. But after healing my UC through my eating habits, the biggest challenge of all came when a change in hormonal birth control medication pulled me down a path of anxiety and depression. It was something that gripped me and didn't let go. I felt helpless with no way out.

Somewhere along my downward spiral, I stopped taking hormonal birth control after learning about its negative impact on my body. That was when my body and mind started to heal. And from there I rebuilt my life.



I believe every single human deserves the time and attention they need to support their bodies at a foundational level. We all deserve to understand how our bodies work, what they need and how they will be affected by what we are told to put into them.

Every beautiful soul deserves to feel immense excitement and gratitude for their lives. YOU deserve to feel empowered and inspired to be the best version of yourself, to design a life you love and are proud to live. You deserve to feel energetic, vibrant, happy and strong every single day. I don't want you to waste another minute feeling less than you could because of someone's half-assed effort to put a band-aid on your problems.

I want to help you take back your life. I want to empower to take steps to design the life of your dreams. I want to give you the resources you need to help you every step of the way.



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Disclaimer

This is based solely on my personal experience and research; nothing herein should be construed as medical advice. Please consult your doctor if you experience serious symptoms including, but not limited to, anxiety, depression, endometriosis, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), acne, fibroids and others.

