

Direct Care, Your Health, Your Way

Dear beloved current and future patients:

I hope this letter finds you well. This is to let you know about my new practice, Heartland Endocrine Group at 4620 E. 53rd Street, Davenport, IA, which will be opening up on December 3rd, 2018. My practice will now be a direct care clinic and this is a new model in medicine, at least in the Quad Cities. What is direct care, and how can you have more control over your health in the future?

This practice will be able to treat you in an integral fashion, helping you to improve your quality of life and potentially help you come off medications, while improving your outcomes. I don't want my care for you dictated by a third party. I like to be the one you call when you have problems, and to be able to see you in a reasonable time period when you're not well — you pay out-of-pocket for your care, but you can be reimbursed by your insurance and often the total cost is not much different.

As you live a longer life, the traditional medical focus on multiple drug regimens has evolved to include a more holistic view of what's required to live a long and healthy life. According to the latest U.S. Census, 30 percent more people are living to 90 plus than did in 1980. In the 2015 United States of Aging Survey, those who are older than 50 named physical and mental wellbeing as some of their top concerns. I want to help you live those years with good function and good health as your endocrinologist.

The shift in medicine

You may have noticed that medicine has been changing over the past decade. I have as well. Pharmaceutical companies offer us drugs for ailments that are “as seen on TV.” New drugs are plentiful but are really expensive. Americans remain in relatively poor health. We are tired, frustrated, continue to gain weight, are sometimes beset by what some in the medical community call “adrenal fatigue.” The adrenal gland, a hormone-producing gland, is actually a workhorse. We have been told by the internet that this gland is ailing, weak, requires support, and that such support will improve our quality of life. As can be seen by a



THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO YOUR HORMONES

What You Need to Know



Hormones play a critical role in our bodies, but what exactly are hormones and why are they important for our health? We'll decode the body's most important hormones and explain how changes in hormone levels can affect your body and your well-being.

TOP 23 HORMONES

There are many different hormones in the human body. Here is a look at the leading hormones, their role and why they're important to know about.

<p>1 Estrogen (es-to-jen)</p> <p>The female sex hormone, and one that men also produce in smaller amounts, is responsible for setting off puberty. Produced primarily by your ovaries, estrogen regulates your menstrual cycle, maintains pregnancy and keeps bones strong for women and men too! Watch out, rock!</p>	<p>2 Progesterone (pro-jes-to-ene)</p> <p>The reason for that week cricked in mid on your calendar, progesterone is a crucial player in your menstrual cycle. After ovulation, these levels rise to prepare your uterus for the implantation of an embryo. If pregnancy doesn't occur, the levels drop again, causing you to get your period.</p>	<p>3 Prolactin (pro-lak-tin)</p> <p>Means to-be are faced with major changes, including the hormones that make during pregnancy. Fun fact: the prolactin gland releases prolactin after childbirth to trigger lactation, which enables moms to breastfeed.</p>	
<p>4 Human Chorionic Gonadotropin (HCG) (hu-man-dio-ri-cin-go-nad-o-top-son)</p> <p>Congratulations you're pregnant! HCG is the hormone that a pregnancy test can detect about two weeks after conception.</p>	<p>5 Testosterone (tes-to-ster-one)</p> <p>Surprisingly, this male sex hormone plays a big role for women, too. It contributes to hair loss, bone density and muscle strength. But when produced in excess, it can lead to conditions like hair loss and pattern balding (baldness).</p>	<p>6 Peptide YY (PYY) (pep-tid-ee-ye)</p> <p>The original weight loss program, PYY is produced in the small intestine and released into your bloodstream after you eat to decrease appetite and make you feel full.</p>	<p>7 Glucagon-Like Peptide 1 (GLP-1) (glu-si-con-like-pep-tid-ee-1)</p> <p>Feeling more satisfied after lunch? It could be GLP-1, the appetite-regulating hormone produced in your gut after eating.</p>
<p>8 Thyroid Hormones (thi-roid hor-mones)</p> <p>Two of the primary players that are released by your thyroid are thyroxine (T4) and triiodothyronine (T3). These hormones regulate your metabolism, determine your energy levels, influence your heart rate, hair growth, and more.</p>	<p>9 Insulin (in-su-lin)</p> <p>As any diabetic knows, insulin couldn't be more important. After you eat, carbs in your meal are broken down into sugars. Your body knows how to use for energy later. People with type 1 diabetes can't make enough insulin, and type 2 diabetes can't make enough or make too much and the body doesn't respond correctly.</p>	<p>10 Glucagon (glu-si-con)</p> <p>Produced by cells in your pancreas, it works to keep your blood sugar levels stable. This hormone breaks down stored glucose so your body can use it for energy.</p>	<p>11 Serotonin (seh-ri-to-ine)</p> <p>If you have major mood swings, you can thank the hormone that doctors and scientists model. Dark chocolate contains a compound, epinephrine, that triggers serotonin, responsible for setting chocolate makes us feel happier.</p>
<p>12 Follicle Stimulating Hormone (FSH) (fol-lic-le-stim-u-lin-ee-ye)</p> <p>Craves strongly built, infancy, know the importance of FSH to women. It helps control the release of eggs by the ovaries, in men, it helps control the production of sperm.</p>	<p>13 Leptin (lep-tin)</p> <p>This hormone is your very own personal trainer. It sends signals to your brain to stop eating if you have enough energy. Your body knows how much energy your body needs throughout the day.</p>	<p>14 Luteinizing Hormone (LH) (lu-te-in-iz-ing hor-mone)</p> <p>Primarily released by LH and known as gonadotropin, it controls the production of estrogen in women and testosterone in men.</p>	<p>15 Melatonin (mel-a-to-ine)</p> <p>Insomnia may feel less familiar with the stress hormones, which regulate our sleep and wake cycles.</p>
<p>16 Oxytocin (ox-y-to-sin)</p> <p>Called the love hormone, oxytocin levels rise when you make a physical contact with another person. It's also known as the hormone of trust and helps with milk production during breastfeeding.</p>	<p>17 Growth Hormone (grow-th hor-mone)</p> <p>As its name implies, it promotes human growth and plays a crucial role in increasing muscle mass and bone density. It's also known as somatotrophic hormone (STH) and is produced by the pituitary gland from breaking down to energy.</p>	<p>18 Cortisol (cor-ti-sol)</p> <p>Stressed out? This hormone is released during times of stress, but it also has many other functions. It helps regulate blood sugar levels and is also involved in the body's response to stress. High levels of cortisol can lead to health problems like high blood pressure and heart disease.</p>	<p>19 Adrenaline (a-dren-a-line)</p> <p>The fight or flight hormone allows you to think clearly and react quickly in a crisis. It's also known as epinephrine. It's released by the adrenal glands and helps you feel more alert and ready to act.</p>
<p>20 Dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA) (de-hy-dro-ep-i-an-dro-ster-one)</p> <p>Responsible for giving teenage strength, the hormone from the adrenal gland and ovaries inhibits production of male and female sex hormones. Working fun things like public hair, we need body care.</p>	<p>21 Parathyroid Hormone (PTH) (par-a-thi-roid hor-mone)</p> <p>Strong bones are key for a long, healthy life, and PTH from the parathyroid glands, it's used to keep bones healthy and support for overall calcium and phosphorus balance in the body.</p>	<p>22 Ghrelin (ghre-lin)</p> <p>Got a hankering in your stomach? You can thank this hunger hormone made by the stomach. It stimulates appetite and prepares the body for food. Researchers believe that ghrelin levels may be the key to weight loss.</p>	<p>23 Aldosterone (al-dos-ter-one)</p> <p>Craving pickle? Made by the adrenal glands, it regulates blood pressure by increasing salt and water retention in the body.</p>

HORMONES AND THE ENDOCRINE SYSTEM

Hormones are the body's chemical messengers and are part of the endocrine system. Endocrine glands make hormones, which travel through the bloodstream to tissues and organs, and control most of our body's major systems. The endocrine system regulates our heart rate, metabolism – how the body gets energy from the foods we eat – appetite, mood, sexual function, reproduction, growth and development, sleep cycles, and more.

HORMONE KEY FACTS

- Hormones play a critical role in our body's chemistry, carrying messages between cells and organs.
- Hormones affect our body's functions, from growth and sexual development and mood to how well we sleep, how we manage stress and how our body breaks down food.
- When they are in proper balance, hormones help the body thrive. But sometimes hormone levels are too high or too low. Hormone imbalances can occur any time regardless of one's age and cause serious health problems requiring ongoing medical management.

ENDOCRINE GLANDS AND HORMONES

Endocrine glands are special groups of cells that make hormones. The major endocrine glands are:

- **Adrenal Glands** – produce androgens and cortisol; gives your body odor and pubic hair, helps in how we respond to stress; regulates blood pressure and more.
- **Hypothalamus** – produces hormones that regulate body temperature, appetite and weight, mood, sex drive, sleep, and thirst.
- **Ovaries** – female reproductive glands that produce eggs and sex hormones – including estrogen, testosterone and progesterone – which are vital to reproductive organ development, breast development, bone health, pregnancy, and fertility.
- **Pancreas** – produces insulin, glucagon and other hormones but primarily responsible for controlling blood sugar levels.
- **Parathyroid** – controls the amount of calcium in our bones and blood.
- **Pineal Gland** – produces melatonin, which is important for sleep cycles.
- **Pituitary Gland** – the “master control gland” makes hormones that control growth, reproduction, lactation, and the activity of other glands.
- **Testes** – male reproductive glands produce sperm and secrete testosterone.
- **Thymus** – active until puberty, produces cells crucial to the immune system that protect the body from threats such as viruses and infections.
- **Thyroid** – produces hormones that control the rate at which the body burns calories and how fast the heart beats.



Vital to our overall health, hormone levels change as we grow and age. Knowing more about the role they play in our bodies can help you protect and manage your health. Download Journey through the Endocrine System Mobile App. Visit hormone.org for more information.

Google search, only 10 to 20k people have adrenal insufficiency in the US – that is, between 40 and 60 people per million of the general population. Secondary adrenal insufficiency, from the pituitary, is twice as common, but still rare. The adrenal gland is obviously a strong hormone producer.

Both hypothyroidism and adrenal fatigue are treated by general practitioners, very few people are seen by endocrinologists. We are specially trained in two-to-three-year fellowships after a three-year residency to treat hormonal diseases, but there are only 5,000 of us nationwide. Patients who don't see an endocrinologist often are given supports or supplements, natural or synthetic, that contain the hormone that the human gland naturally produces, and only suppress the hormone production by the body – supplementation does not heal any disease. Did you know that brand-name Synthroid (levothyroxine, \$70 per month or more), which treats hypothyroidism, or underactive thyroid disease, has been the top-prescribed medicine in the United States

for several years, with 21.5 million fills per month? That many people do not have hypothyroidism. Those figures are just for Synthroid, not generic levothyroxine, Armour, nature-throid, all other thyroid preparations, including compounded thyroid (all of which really don't help you lose weight).

What is a free-range physician and why did I become one?

Why are free-range doctors as different as free-range eggs are from the store brand? Because they can take their time and can solve your individual problem. Many things in life can be just ok. That even includes some healthcare that you receive, say for a fever when your doctor has no opening. However, when you have a chronic, disabling condition, it is better to get care from someone well-trained to handle your disease and someone who knows you and cares about you. You need a free-range doctor there to sit and listen and to advise you specifically with your particular case in mind. You also need to rule out obscure diseases that might really shorten your life. All the while, you want to improve your lifestyle so that you can avoid (more, worse) chronic diseases.

Endocrinology:



- Endocrine glands make hormones; there are over 50 hormones created by endocrine glands in the body. The thyroid gland, for instance, produces hormones that help control the rate at which the body burns calories, rate the bowels excrete, function of the liver and muscles, bone turnover, and most other functions of the body. Other glands produce hormones that are very specific, such as the parathyroid gland, which produces parathyroid hormone and only regulates bone and calcium levels in the body.
- Like the nervous system, the endocrine uses chemicals as communicators. Instead of using nerves to transmit information, the endocrine system uses blood vessels to deliver hormones to cells. Endocrine diseases are common and happen even when one step in the process doesn't work as it should.
- Endocrine disruptors, a category of toxic chemicals used in consumer products and agriculture, are associated with a diverse array of health issues. These non-natural compounds or mixtures of chemicals can mimic, block, or interfere with the way endocrine hormones work. This is possibly why there is higher testosterone levels and more polycystic ovarian syndrome in women now than before, and can contribute to weight gain and to lower testosterone levels in men.
- An endocrinologist can help with problems of growth and development, metabolism (body energy levels), reproduction/menstruation (infertility assessment), and specifically, with thyroid disorders and uncontrolled diabetes.

“A truly successful solution depends on partnership: patients (first), healthcare professionals, and pharmacies who work together for the ultimate benefit of you, the patient.”

What can I, as a free-range doctor, provide you? I can look for the root cause of symptoms, sometimes medical and sometimes non-medical, and can personalize the treatment for you. It's not a one-size fits all: I believe that each patient with diabetes, thyroid, adrenal, pituitary disease, or polycystic ovaries deserves an individualized and comprehensive care plan. Sometimes, thyroidmom.com is not correct about what you need tested, and proper testing, including ruling-out obscure conditions, is needed. Sometimes with a free-range doctor like me, you can discuss your spiritual life and how it impacts your health. You may be happy to have me spend sufficient time with you to listen to your concerns. However, using my experience, training, and by employing different techniques until you feel better and your long-term health is better, is the main difference I can provide.

Endocrinologists like me specifically treat you if you have autoimmune diseases, such as Hashimoto's, Addison's, Graves's disease, and type 1 diabetes. Sometimes, like British Prime Minister Theresa May, you may be misdiagnosed with type 2 diabetes, because your autoimmune diabetes occurred when you were older. Sometimes, you do have Hashimoto's thyroiditis, but would do better without medications, like some herbal/dietary support. Sometimes, your Graves's disease is going into remission and you just need follow-up to make sure it stays there. You might even need thyroid support for a short term, because your fertility is sub-optimal, but not as a long-term solution. As free-range doctor, I can do all of this with you.

Often, free-rangers don't take insurance — I don't want my care for you dictated by a third party such as an insurance agency. Even though I have an electronic medical record, there is fragmentation of information that makes it difficult for me to coordinate with pharmacies regarding your care, which also waylays your approval for medications and supplies to improve your health. A truly successful solution depends on partnership: patients (first), healthcare professionals, and pharmacies who work together for the ultimate benefit of you, the patient. By choosing a free-range doctor, you can build a strong working relationship to improve the quality of your life and the care for your chronic medical conditions.

To your health,

Mary Kathleen Figaro,
MD, MS, FACE

I hope to see you soon and to take care of your endocrine needs at Heartland Endocrine Group. I will be practicing at 4620 E. 53rd Street, Davenport, IA 52807. You can get in touch with Heartland Endocrine Group online at www.heartlandendocrinegroup.com or by calling our office at 563-424-6306.