



# THE SPECTRUM OF HEALTH

— P O D C A S T —

## Podcast Session #9

### ***The Art and Science of Female Hormones***

With Dr. Ginger Nash

*Dr. Schaffner speaks with Dr. Ginger Nash about feminology, hormone balance (without hormone replacements), menopause, and the surgery that would lead her to a 20-year career as a naturopathic physician. For more information, visit Dr. Nash's Facebook page:*

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/168878283890605/>

00:06 Dr. Christine Schaffner: Welcome to the Spectrum of Health Podcast. I'm Dr. Christine Schaffner and today, I'm speaking with Dr. Ginger Nash. Dr. Ginger Nash is a dear friend and today we talk about the movement she's created called Feminology. We talk about how to best support women through these natural hormonal shifts in life using naturopathic medicine. Dr. Nash graduated from the National College of Naturopathic Medicine in 1998 and in her 20 years of clinical experience has worked with thousands of women on natural hormonal balance without the use of hormone replacement. Complex homeopathy, herbal medicine and nutrigenomics are the therapeutic cornerstones of her practice. Dr. Nash taught at the University of Bridgeport's College of Naturopathic Medicine Clinic for six years and has taught seminars for other health professionals throughout the US and Canada for over a dozen years. Dr. Nash is a sought-after speaker and has recently launched an online health program for women through her umbrella organization called Feminology, the art and science of female hormones, with her colleague, Dr. Tara Nayak. These doctors interweave the scientific knowledge behind natural medicine in the art of helping women heal. I hope you enjoy our conversation today.

01:24 DS: Hi everyone, we have a unique episode in that during the recording, this is one of the first times this ever has happened to me...we have an excellent interview with Dr. Ginger Nash however we cannot hear my questions in our conversation, so we are going to keep the wonderful content that Dr. Nash had for us and I am throughout the interview going to just insert the questions I did ask. It's going to have a little bit of a different flow and I really appreciate you bearing with us. Dr. Nash has a wealth of knowledge and she gave us such a beautiful interview that I do not want to lose the content nor

re-record it...so if you believe in mercury retrograde...I ended up recording this interview during that time, and so we'll blame that.

02:14 DS: Thank you for bearing with me and I hope you enjoy this wonderful interview with Dr. Nash. I started out the interview welcoming Dr. Nash and I want everyone to know that during my time at Bastyr I used to really love listening to her lectures. She really opened my eyes to the use of drainage and true naturopathic medicine used in addressing women's health. It's just been such a joy for me to be able to get to know her as a friend and a colleague, and she has been really influential to me in my journey of learning naturopathic medicine. We all have a story that leads us to naturopathic medicine and with Dr. Nash's interest in women's health, and our topic of Feminology today, she shares with us how her personal health journey led her to naturopathic medicine.

03:15 Dr. Ginger Nash: Yes, I guess that is the truest inspiration for me in terms of the work that I do, which I've been doing for 20 years now, which is kind of amazing to say, I'm coming up on my 20th year in practice. I'm also coming up on some big anniversaries, tomorrow actually is the anniversary of a major surgery that I had around a woman's health issue, and I was young, I was only 24 and I had been on birth control pills for six years, and they ended up really destroying my health, and caused a lot of problems for me personally, but ultimately led me to an epiphany that I had after this surgery, where I lost one of my ovaries. This really showed me that I wanted to become a naturopathic physician, and help women get back in touch with their bodies. So that's the underlying thrust of my work, for 20 years. And of course, I work with people with other kinds of chronic conditions, but my specialty has really

become hormone balance for women especially without the use of any hormone replacement therapy.

04:36 DS: The next question that I asked Dr. Nash is, what is Feminology? I believe this is really a movement that she is creating, for helping women transition through these natural phases of life and hormonal changes, really honouring these rhythms in a woman's body.

04:56 DN: Feminology is the work of myself, and I also have a partner in this project, her name is Dr. Tara Nayak, she's fantastic. She happens to be younger than me, and has a different background, and different issues, but the two of us together, we really are committed fundamentally to helping women have better options for their various women's health and hormone issues. The idea is to empower women to feel more comfortable and at ease in their bodies and also provide them with all of the scientific knowledge that we have now in the natural medicine world. I'm sure you face this as well, where people think, "oh natural medicine, there's no research, there's no proof that any of this works."

05:52 DN: One of the reasons I really love working with Tara is that her background is in genetics, as an undergrad before she even went to naturopathic medical school, and she's a total research geek. So we geek out about the science behind what we know about the body and physiology, and we then translate that into or interweave that into empowering women to make decisions about their health and the way they want to take care of themselves based on good scientific information, but also based on the idea that women can actually get in touch with the natural rhythms of their bodies and that is what is ultimately going to lead them to not just the greatest sense of health

and well-being, but also to our development as human beings and as women. That is really, really important to both of us.

06:54 DN: We met a couple of years ago, and immediately connected, we actually met through a Genomics Conference and we share a mentor, Dr. Peter D'Adamo. We just immediately wanted to work together, and we have just recently started a movement, as you say, we have a wonderful Facebook community that's growing daily. I would love for thousands of women to get involved with this conversation. We also have some programs that we can talk a little bit about later, but the idea is to really help spread good information in the natural medicine world about women's health issues in particular.

07:40 DS: Dr. Nash focuses on alternatives to even bio-identical hormones and transitioning women through menopause and other phases of their menstrual cycle. And so I asked her what prompted her to develop alternatives, and what are the concerns that women are coming to her with, and what has she seen in clinical practice that helped her to create and develop feminology.

08:09 DN: Again, I'm sure you hear this kind of thing all the time, too, especially for women, that a lot of times their doctors, not every doctor of course, there are many, many good medical doctors out there. I don't want to disparage an entire community of healthcare professionals, I would never do that, but I see the people, especially women, whose doctors have told them, Oh, there's really nothing going on with you physically, it's all in your head, you just need an antidepressant, you need an anxiolytic. And what drives them to the naturopathic doctor's office, is that that type of medicine is really about drugs and suppressing whatever process is going on in the body, instead of

trying to figure out the root cause of that imbalance, and then offering women other options besides drugs or suppressive types of therapies.

09:13 DN: Some of the more common things that I see personally are women with infertility issues, these are certainly on the rise. PCOS is another huge huge problem. Polycystic ovarian syndrome, for those of you that aren't familiar with PCOS. That's an area that Tara is actually particularly interested in because she was diagnosed with that as a younger woman. I work with a lot of peri-menopausal and menopausal women but also women that are just having irregular cycles or have had problems with hormonal contraceptives, and are looking to manage their cycles naturally. Women are afraid of their periods. It's not like you're going to be leaping around like in a tampon commercial, necessarily, but your period should not be something to dread every month. It should not be something that puts you in bed for two days or something that you have to swallow half a bottle of Advil just to get through.

10:29 DN: And for many women, there's so many problems in the environment as I'm sure you're familiar with Christine. There is environmental toxicity and endocrine disruptors that cause women's cycles to be completely messed up, their hormones are thrown out of balance with all sorts of exposures hormones that are given to animals, and we now consume hormones that are in the drinking water. And all these chemicals that mimic the effects of estrogen in the body and can just wreak havoc on the subtle orchestras, I like to say, of the endocrine system, and of female hormone balance. I see a lot of women with painful periods, irregular periods, they've been diagnosed with PCOS or they have thyroid problems or any combination of the above. I don't particularly specialize in fertility because I think that's such an important

specialty all on its own, so I usually refer out to some other excellent colleagues in the area, but my passion right now is working with particularly the peri-menopausal and menopausal age group.

11:56 DS: One of the many things that I love about Ginger's approach, is that she really honours this natural process that's happening in a woman's body. There's a lot of fear, misconceptions, and a lot of suppression rather than celebration of what it means to go through menopause. I think she has a really beautiful view and a really beautiful reframe about how to embrace and honour this life transition, and so she explains that with us.

12:28 DN: We've lost touch with this idea in so many ancient cultures that a woman as she ages, and as her ovaries go into retirement. As I like to say, you really move into a deeper life phase that I've started calling the phase of wisdom and strength, and we've gotten to an age, I'm about to turn 50. We've learned a thing or two in our lifetimes, hopefully, and we want to use what we've learned and the struggles that we've had to define and determine what we want for this next phase of life. And hopefully we're in a position where we can step back and reflect a little bit on our life experiences and de-stress, and really learn what is important to us and help create a map or a set of guidelines. That's what I'm doing with this program that I'm launching, to really find the life that you want and create the life that you want.

13:35 DN: And that's an easy thing to say, but really going inside and figuring out where you're at and where you want to go is an important, important process to go through at this life stage. I mean, we should have puberty rituals as well, but we should have menopausal rituals. We should have preparation. And that's one of the things that kind of blew my mind when I first launched

this program last year as a pilot--highly educated women that are very aware of so many things going on in the world, had no idea really what the beginnings of peri-menopause were going to look like or were going to feel like.

14:26 DN: So I've often said, "Wouldn't it be great if we had a class?" Take a day or two off from work, paid vacation. You go to this spot and you learn about what to expect, and learn how to really embrace this period of time because it can be a very, very powerful opportunity to shift some things, and not just feel like it's this scary "I'm going to fall apart" kind of feeling. Or even worse, dry up and blow away, because that's what menopause looked at as a disease created, it really was a construct in the 1950s to sell synthetic drugs that people now refer to as hormone replacement. That's one of the things that I'm really passionate about, is changing the conversation around. This ties into my work around oral contraceptives and other hormonal forms of birth control. People refer to them as hormones but they're not hormones at all, they're really drugs and they have the effects of drugs all around the body.

15:32 DN: There's a lot of information that I think needs to be presented to women about what to expect at various life stages and what kinds of things they can tap into in their own body. The reason we're all naturopathic physicians is because we know that the body can heal itself, given the right set of circumstances, information and with enough support to eliminate toxins. And you mentioned drainage. That's always first and foremost what needs to happen, there are incredible healing capacities that we have, and when we just suppress everything that the body is attempting to do it gets very confusing and people get very sick.

16:19 DS: Ginger and I both see that the environment is really impacting all of our health. I asked her about her approach for the increasing environmental toxicity, and also looking at how this is creating a lot of endocrine disruption and imbalance in our female hormones.

16:39 DN: Like I said, I've really come to see this phase as one where we can move into wisdom. But first and foremost, you always have to address the body and clear out some of the garbage, if you will, before we're going to really get to know ourselves better. That's what I've done with every single patient that I've seen since I opened my practice, and I'm sure it's what you do every day as well. It's like, we've got to start with the basics, like eliminations and getting rid of some of the crap that we're all exposed to. And then that actually, it sounds so simple, and in many ways it is, but what it really does is, it starts the process of clearing out everything from a cellular level up to a higher level, so that we can start to really understand ourselves and know ourselves. So it always starts with drainage and eliminations and then for some people that are in need of more of an intense detox, we can talk about detoxification and the health of the liver, of course, because the liver is what metabolises all of our hormones including all of our estrogens and progestins and all of those hormones that we are exposed to, and endocrine disruptors, and whatnot.

18:01 DN: And then after the body is addressed, we can move into a deeper stage of discovery of who we are and really try to figure out who we are, what we want, what's important to us, where we want to put our focus, where our lessons have led us in our lives, and really learn how to de-stress and basically let go. I mean what I find for women that are in their 40s is...and you know, peri-menopausal changes can begin mid-40s, sometimes even early

40s for women. We've been such multi-taskers, we've had children, some of us, or had careers, and have been taking care of people, and managing households and having all kinds of responsibilities pull us in so many directions. It's really time to pull back and say, "Okay, what's most meaningful to me, what can I let go of?" I have a whole teaching module called "Relaxing The Over-Controller" because so many of us women, high-functioning powerhouse women, can be seen as being controlling, but it's because we've had to do so much, you know? And so really figuring out like, "Okay, what can I back off of, where can I let go?" Some of that is also around the aging process, right? So, this time of a woman's life, we're facing, "okay, we are maybe coming to the end of our reproductive years and what things can we let go of?"

19:44 DN: Can we let go of ourselves, in a certain way of moving through the world? And so your body is changing at this stage of life, but your outlook on life is really changing too, and your relationships with people close to you, and maybe it's time to let go or set different boundaries. So I get into a lot of those kinds of issues as well, sort of the larger issues that women are facing at this time in their lives. There are also changes in sexual health, changes in relationships with family. A lot of us are starting to take care of our parents at this age, so it's a big life transition, it really is.

20:37 DS: I asked Ginger more about her program, "Feminology" and what she uses as alternatives to bioidentical hormones, and how she puts people on what she calls the "natural menopause map."

20:50 DN: First of all, I want to say too, and I've had this conversation with some other colleagues who use a lot of bioidentical hormones...they are definitely far safer. There's no question. As I said just a few minutes ago, hormone replacement therapy, things like Premarin and Prempro, those are synthetic drugs that are extraordinarily powerful and need to be metabolised through the liver many, many times over. So bioidentical natural hormones is definitely one option for many women, but for a lot of women, they don't want the hormones at all. I have a lot of people who have a family history of breast cancer or other gynaecological cancers. The first thing that happens when there's any high risk like that or any changes in the breast tissue or anything that could be ominous in terms of a cancer formation is the oncologist would recommend that they stop any kind of hormone activating drugs, or certainly bioidenticals as well. So I do want to just say that, that it's definitely a step in the right direction.

22:02 DN: But for me, I prefer to not even have to rely on bioidentical hormones or natural hormones. There is so much you can do with nutrients. The field of nutrigenomics has completely blown up in the last decade, and we know so many things that can tweak the gene expression, that can affect all sorts of hormonal activity in the body. I use nutritional supplements and recommend various protocols to women based on, sometimes, the genetics if we have them, but there's plenty to do even without that. And then, certainly, herbal medicine is a fantastic way for women to naturally balance their hormones without using drugs or even bioidenticals. And then, there are a lot of lifestyle modifications as well. Like you were saying, Christine, even if you're going through some difficult changes and hormonal fluctuations, there are many things you can do...exercise for example, there's a whole module in my program about movement for mental health. We all know how movement can

be a tremendous benefit to one's state of mind, for stress-relief, and for the health of various organ systems.

23:37 DN: And also another major area where I support women is the health of their lymphatic system. This is an area that I have written about and done some lectures about to professionals as well over the last couple of years. The lymphatic system is super important to keep the body optimized from the perspective of, again, the drainage, from the most basic, eliminating toxins, but also in keeping your immune system healthy, keeping inflammation at bay, and also moving hormones around the body, especially progesterone. As we move into perimenopause, we start to have these anovulatory cycles where we're not ovulating every month. So we have lower amounts of progesterone relative to estrogen, most of the time, which is a big problem for many women, and it's referred to as estrogen dominance. So helping a woman's lymphatic system is always part of my general approach as well.

24:44 DN: And this is, again, the case for anything that we work with in naturopathic medicine. There's no real magic bullet, but it's really a matter of coming at things from a multitude of angles and working with the entire system, from drainage and eliminations, to targeted nutritionals that makes sense, not just like, "okay, I read an article about this nutrient or that herb, and this treatment." People are just throwing everything but the kitchen sink into their bodies, that's not going to get them to a place of being well. It's not just about what I'm doing, but it's the application of how and in what order, and that's really part of the whole map concept, is knowing, having the clinical expertise and experience to know where you need to start, and then when you can move into deeper processes, and ultimately how to raise the level of health over a longer period of time.

25:54 DS: Ginger and I discussed the cost that hormonal birth control has on a woman's body. While we, of course, respect the decision for women to use this as a contraceptive, there is this idea that hormonal birth control can solve any menstrual issue or any irregularity or imbalance. We just pose the question of how can we really look deeper, and at the root cause, and have better options for women.

26:23 DN: Yes, absolutely. Unfortunately, birth control pills are the number one recommendation for everything from 10-year-old girls to 55-year-old women, it's amazing how they're just given out without a lot of information about what I like to call the true cost of taking them. And for a lot of women, they're afraid of their periods because there's so much imbalance and they're so miserable. But really what's happening is on a very fundamental basic level, the hormonal contraceptives can deplete many, many essential nutrients. That is just the most basic. I have patients that sure, for whatever their set of reasons and they're obviously very personal, they feel like they need to stay on the pill. At the very least, you've got to replace certain B vitamins and folic acid and all kinds of things that are being depleted from the effects of those drugs. And then again, back to our touchstone, Christine, of drainage, when you're suppressing your natural hormonal rhythm, which is what hormonal contraceptives are doing...they are suppressing that whole symphony from the pituitary to the uterus where you have a monthly cycle, you're suppressing that extraordinary way that women eliminate and detoxify through the menstrual blood.

28:01 DN: This is why a lot of women get so many cramps, because the blood that is coming out is full of various acids and other toxins that are being

eliminated on a month-to-month basis. So you're basically clogging up your system by not allowing for that eliminatory monthly cycle and shedding. And then you're messing with all those endocrine feedback loops that affect the brain. This is why, I believe it's within the first year, over 50% of women like you said, just know that it's not right for their body or they become depressed or they lose their libido, or they are bleeding incessantly, or they don't get a period at all...there's just so many problems. And so many women feel so miserable on hormonal contraceptives that they stop. I believe the research shows that it's about 50% of women that will stop within the first year. That's a big deal. I think it was last year they developed a hormonal contraceptive pill for men to take, but they had to stop the trials because the men didn't feel well on it.

29:28 DN: They were like, "we're never buying that drug, we're not going to put in our money into making that drug." Because men won't take it, because they feel so crappy. Its like, yes, the onus has always been on women of course, and women are the ones that get pregnant, so it's obviously a much bigger concern. I don't want to come across as judgmental, I know for a lot of younger women who are not ready to have children, the thought of becoming pregnant causes a lot more anxiety than what the birth control pill might be doing to them, but they should know and have that information to make that decision from a place of education and a place of options, not a feeling of, "this is the only way that I can get through my life, is to suppress this entire rhythm that we have." And then even getting into more of the esoteric and spiritual aspect of things, I think it really cuts women off from this inherent wisdom that the body has, and that's really the sensitive part of it for me, is that I think that women may have no idea what the true cost is, because it's

not very evident or apparent that those things can be very subtly changing our mental outlook.

30:51 DN: And there's more of a conversation happening around this now, and that's why I'm so excited to be launching this movement and the work with Feminology, I think there's so much potential. We're going to launch a podcast and we're going to be talking about all these issues. Another thing that I think is really important is bringing issues of race and class into the world of natural medicine and that's something that Tara and I feel very strongly needs to be incorporated into our world. The access to the kinds of things that we're talking about, we want to make that more accessible. I don't want naturopathic medicine to just be for rich white people.

31:37 DN: There's just so much work to be done, and over half the population are women, so they need to find a place where they can get good information about this type of intervention that is recommended so readily by so many of their doctors. And again, I don't want to disparage medical doctors, but that's what they know, that's the training, whereas our training is in trusting the body to heal and trying to get people to a place where their bodies can heal themselves. The training of traditional doctors is absolutely not that, it's about finding a way to stop the body from running out of control, and this whole focus on pathology instead of focusing on health. So it's part of a larger mission in natural medicine in general.

32:43 DS: I end our conversation asking Ginger how we can learn more about her work and her new program, Feminology. I hope that you all enjoyed our conversation and again, I thank you for bearing with this unique audio. As you can see from the conversation Ginger is such a wealth of knowledge, and

I hope that she gave you some wonderful things to think about. Please go to Ginger's website and learn more about the wonderful work she's doing.

33:11 DN: I do definitely see people long distance. I have people from Canada and from the West Coast and yes, I'm in Connecticut, but I definitely work with people virtually, and sometimes as I'm sure you know, you've got to find local people to do supportive therapies with, etcetera. But I also have moved into the online space and am working with these online programs, the signature program of the Feminology movement at this point is my program for peri-menopausal and menopausal women and we're going to be re-running that in just a couple of weeks. I run this program twice a year, so it happens in spring and fall, I'm very excited about that. It's a three-month program, and it's a pretty deep dive into a lot of the issues that we have touched upon today in our conversation. You do get a lot of one-on-one support. We have some live meetings and then we have some recorded teaching modules, and then I also have a number of colleagues that are coming in to do some expert lectures. If you're interested in that, I've got some videos that you could watch and certainly get involved in the Feminology movement. If you're on Facebook, there's a Feminology group, and we can provide you with the link to that, but also we're going to be launching programs later this year, one specifically for PCOS and the other for repairing birth control damage for women. So that could be any number of things, I've worked with a number of women that have actually had problems with IUDs as well.

35:00 DN: Problem with IUDs can be either hormonal ones or sometimes there's local issues where the IUD has embedded in the uterus. So all these kinds of issues around hormonal contraception damage are forefront in our online programs, and we'll be launching those. But the only one that is in full

operational mode at this point is the menopause program which is called the Natural Menopause Map. And again, it is an offering that is not using bio-identical hormones and certainly not synthetic hormones to traverse menopause. Coming out of it with a lot more confidence and ease in your body and knowing yourself better is really the ultimate goal.

35:48 DS: Thank you for listening to the Spectrum of Health Podcast, I hope you enjoyed my conversation with Dr. Ginger Nash today, and if you'd like to find out more about her work and her program Feminology, you can find out more in the show notes. Have a great day.