



BRIGHT WITHIN

a free guide for women

The Hormone Starter Guide

*An education-first look at your body's signals,
your labs, and the lifestyle foundations
that support hormone health from the inside out.*

Written by Dr. Bright
Education-based wellness • brightwithin.co

a letter from Dr. Bright

Before we begin,

Friend,

Before we walk through this guide, I want to tell you the truth of my own journey. For a long time, my standard labs read as "normal" on paper. And for a long time, it was easy to write off what I was feeling as just life, or age, or stress. But my body was telling a different story, and I wanted real answers.

So I did what my background in the sciences had trained me to do. I read. I researched. I translated a wave of labs and clinical literature until the patterns began to become clear. I learned about root causes. I learned that "normal on paper" is not the same as feeling like yourself again. And slowly, through informed, consistent, grounded choices, my body began to respond.

This guide is a starting point. It is not a diagnosis, and it is not a prescription. It is the education I wish someone had handed me years ago: a calm, plain-language look at the signals your body uses to communicate, the lab markers worth understanding, and the foundations that quietly make everything else work better.

Come as you are. Wherever you are in your journey, you are welcome here. Let's dig deeper, together.

With care,

Dr. Bright

how to use this

Four quiet sections.

This guide is educational. It is not a diagnosis or a treatment plan. Its purpose is to help you notice what your body is telling you, walk into your next appointment as an informed partner, and support yourself with foundations that research consistently shows matter most.

- One** Hormone signals worth noticing.
Tune in to the everyday cues your body is already giving you.

- Two** Lab markers worth asking about.
A plain-language list of the labs that often paint a fuller picture.

- Three** Questions for your next appointment.
How to ask curious, respectful questions that invite collaboration.

- Four** Lifestyle foundations.
The quiet daily practices that support hormone health in every season.

Your labs tell a story. Let's learn to read it, together.

section one

Signals Worth Noticing

Your body is always communicating. These are some of the more common signals women experience when hormones, metabolism, or the nervous system are asking for support. Check anything that feels familiar.

Energy and fatigue

- Waking tired, even after a full night of sleep
- Afternoon energy crash (especially 2pm to 4pm)
- Relying on caffeine to function
- Feeling wired but tired at night

Cycle and reproductive signals

- Irregular, skipped, or heavy cycles
- Painful periods or strong premenstrual symptoms
- Difficulty conceiving or carrying pregnancies
- Low libido or changes in sexual response

Metabolic signals

- Stubborn weight gain, especially around the midsection
- Strong sugar or carb cravings
- Feeling shaky or lightheaded between meals
- Weight that does not respond to food and exercise changes

Mood and sleep signals

- New or worsening anxiety, irritability, or low mood
- Trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking too early
- Brain fog or difficulty focusing
- Feeling tearful or emotionally reactive around your cycle

Skin, hair, and body signals

- Adult acne, especially around the chin and jaw
- Hair thinning or hair loss
- Unwanted hair growth on the face or body
- Dry skin, brittle nails, or a puffy face

Lab Markers Worth Asking About

Most standard panels cover the basics. These are the markers that often help paint a fuller picture, when they are clinically appropriate for your situation. Always discuss with your physician or qualified provider whether any of these are right for you.

Metabolic and blood sugar

Fasting glucose	The baseline of your blood sugar, measured after 8 to 12 hours of fasting.
Fasting insulin	Often overlooked on standard panels. Can rise before glucose does.
HbA1c	A 3-month average of your blood sugar.
hs-CRP	A sensitive marker of systemic inflammation.

Thyroid panel (full, not just TSH)

TSH	Signal from the brain to the thyroid. A starting point, not the full picture.
Free T4	The storage form of thyroid hormone circulating in the blood.
Free T3	The active form of thyroid hormone your cells actually use.
Reverse T3	Can rise under stress and may blunt T3 activity.
TPO and TgAb antibodies	Autoimmune markers. Often missed on routine panels.

Sex hormones (timed to your cycle when appropriate)

Estradiol (E2)	The dominant estrogen in reproductive years.
Progesterone	Best measured in the mid-luteal phase (around day 21 of a 28 day cycle).
Total and free testosterone	Relevant for energy, muscle, libido, and PCOS evaluation.
DHEA-S	An adrenal hormone, useful in PCOS and stress contexts.

SHBG

Sex hormone binding globulin. Influences how much hormone is active.

LH and FSH

Pituitary signals. Helpful in PCOS and perimenopause contexts.

section two, continued

More markers to consider.

Nutrients

Vitamin D (25-OH)	Plays a role in hormone production, mood, and immune function.
Ferritin	Your body's iron storage. Often low in women long before standard iron is flagged.
B12 and folate	Critical for energy, methylation, and nervous system support.
Magnesium (RBC)	A more sensitive measure of magnesium status than standard serum magnesium.

Inflammation and methylation

hs-CRP	Low grade, systemic inflammation.
Homocysteine	Reflects methylation and B vitamin status.

A quiet reminder

A lab result is a data point in a conversation. It is not a verdict, and it is not a diagnosis. The goal is to look at your labs in context of your symptoms, your history, and your whole life. Always discuss what testing is appropriate, and what results mean for you, with your physician or qualified provider.

Questions for Your Next Appointment

These are curious, respectful, collaborative questions. Appointments are short, so pick the two or three that fit your situation most and bring them with you.

- 01 *“Can we look at a full thyroid panel together, including Free T3, Free T4, and thyroid antibodies?”*
- 02 *“Could we add a fasting insulin and HbA1c to my next blood draw so we can look at the full metabolic picture?”*
- 03 *“My [energy, sleep, cycle, mood, skin] has shifted. What root-cause areas might be worth exploring?”*
- 04 *“Would it make sense to check vitamin D, ferritin, B12, and magnesium given my symptoms?”*
- 05 *“For my cycle concerns, when in my cycle would you recommend timing my labs?”*
- 06 *“Could I get a copy of my labs to review? I'd like to understand them more deeply.”*
- 07 *“How would you interpret my results in the context of my symptoms, not just the reference range?”*
- 08 *“If we were going to start with one foundational change (nutrition, sleep, movement, stress), which would you recommend first?”*
- 09 *“Are there any referrals, like endocrinology, nutrition, or pelvic health, that you think would be helpful at this stage?”*
- 10 *“What would you want to see improve, or shift, before our next follow up?”*

section four

Lifestyle Foundations

Before any protocol, these are the quiet practices that support hormone health across every season of a woman's life. Small, consistent, grounded choices, done most days, do more than any perfect plan done rarely.

Blood sugar balance

Most hormone conversations live downstream of blood sugar. Aim for protein, fiber, and healthy fat at each meal. Avoid starting your day with coffee on an empty stomach.

Protein, first

Many women are under-eating protein. A useful anchor: aim for roughly 30 grams at breakfast. It stabilizes mood, energy, and cravings for the rest of the day.

Movement in two layers

Daily low-intensity movement (walking, mobility) plus 2 to 3 short sessions of resistance training each week. Muscle is a hormone-responsive tissue.

Sleep as a non-negotiable

Aim for a consistent bed and wake time, even on weekends. Morning light within 30 minutes of waking. Dim lights 1 to 2 hours before bed.

Stress and nervous system care

A few minutes of slow breathing, prayer, journaling, or time outside every day. The nervous system is the quiet hinge of hormone health.

Nutrient-dense foundations

Build meals around whole foods: colorful vegetables, quality protein, healthy fats, and minimally processed carbohydrates. Think addition, not restriction.

Cycle-aware rhythms

If you still have a cycle, notice what changes across the month. Energy, sleep, and cravings can shift. That is information, not a problem.

Less perfection, more consistency

You do not need a perfect protocol. You need a consistent foundation. Come as you are.
Start small. Keep going.

bringing it together

What to do with what you've learned.

Notice, don't judge.

Over the next few weeks, pay attention to the signals you checked. Are they consistent? Do they cluster around certain times of your cycle, week, or day?

Pick one foundation to lean into.

Rather than overhauling everything, choose one lifestyle foundation to practice for the next 4 to 6 weeks. Small and consistent wins.

Bring observations to your care team.

Use the questions in section three to invite a deeper conversation about what is showing up in your body.

Come back as you grow.

This guide will meet you differently in different seasons of your life. Keep it close and revisit as needed.

*Learning to listen to your body
is where every real change begins.
You are already doing that, here.*

stay close

Keep learning with us.

Bright Within is an education-based wellness platform for women, and for the parents raising neurodivergent children. We send gentle, weekly-ish notes on root-cause education. No hype, no fear, no shame. Just real education, in plain language.

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