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HEALTH

Maintain youth naturally with bioidentical hormones

People age because their hormones decline. Restoring hormones to youthful levels can undo many of the negative effects associated with aging. A woman's behavioral and physical characteristics are more often than not defined by the varying levels of hormones present in her body.

It is a fact of life that a person will age more slowly if they maintain their hormone levels. Dr. Charles Mok, medical director of the Michigan Mesotherapy Institute, is among a group of physicians with expertise in natural, or bioidentical, hormone replacement.

"Our bodies' real hormones slow down the aging process," Mok said. "Hormones do not decline because we age, we age because our hormones decline. Because youth is associated with low risk for disease, replacing hormones to

youthful levels is part of a proactive anti-aging program."

Bioidentical hormones are exactly like those found naturally in the body. Unlike commonly prescribed synthetic drug hormones such as Premarin and Provera, bioidentical hormones are exactly like the hormones you produced when you were younger.

If a patient opts for bioidentical hormone replacement to combat the effects of aging, the appropriate level of hormones given is assessed through a series of blood tests. The long-term negative effects seen with synthetic drug hormones are not known to occur with natural bioidentical hormone replacement.

Every woman has different hormonal needs.

"The one-size-fits-all hormone replacement pills are chemicals and not exact copies of

human hormones," Mok said. "Drug companies cannot patent human hormones, so they use copies of horses' hormones. The most commonly prescribed drug hormone comes from pregnant mares, hence the name Premarin. Drug hormones taken orally have a negative effect on the balance of the body's other hormones, yet they are commonly prescribed for convenience. For each individual, I begin with laboratory tests of hormone levels. Each patient is then monitored carefully through regular follow up."

The major advantage of using bioidentical hormones is that they are natural and are exactly the same hormones the body produced in youth. Synthetic hormone drugs - such as Premarin, PremPro and Provera - are very strong and often produce intolerable side effects.