COMPILATION JUST FOR WOMEN
DIAGNOSED WITH ADRENAL DISEASE

From NADF News®, VOL. XXIII, No. 4 • 2008, Q & A

Q. I have had Addison’s Disease for 7 years now and my current age is 48 years old. I had a question that my doctor can’t answer at this time. Can Addison’s patient’s take birth control pills? I have two large cysts that have grown on my ovaries and the doctor wants to give me birth control pills to receive balanced hormones? Do you know if birth control pills will affect my health since I have Addison’s Disease? OR can I take them without out side affects.

A. Yes, birth control pills are safe and effective for women with Addison’s disease. They do not have any effect on the dosage of glucocorticoid or mineralocorticoid therapy.

From NADF News®, VOL. XXII, No. 1 • 2007, Q & A

Q. At this time I am actually looking for more information about the safety of the new vaccine Gardisal® (to prevent HPV infections) and its use in Addisonians. Any help you could provide would be great. Thank you for your time.

A. I think this vaccine is a good idea, and is safe for Addisonians.

From NADF News®, VOL. XXI, No. 3 • 2006, Q & A

Q. Does Addison’s disease impact on sexual drive and sexuality?

A. Most people with Addison’s disease have perfectly normal libido (sex drive) and sexual function. Men usually have normal erections and ejaculation, and women usually have normal orgasms. When sex drive is lacking, it may be due to sensitivity to the loss of dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA), measured as DHEAS in blood tests. This is an adrenal androgen, and it is missing because the entire adrenal cortex is lost in Addison’s disease. I normally recommend that people with Addison’s disease try replacing this hormone with overthe-counter DHEA pills - 25 mg per day for women, 50 mg for men. Sometimes, but not always, this can help. It also may provide a slight sense of improved well being in Addisonians generally. If this does not help, men should have their serum testosterone checked. Also, keep in mind that sexual function can be affected by any other medical problem that might coexist with the Addison’s disease, especially thyroid disease and anemia. Other medication can have an effect, such as beta blockers. Finally, don’t forget psychological factors. All together, though, there is no reason an Addisonian shouldn’t be able to have normal sexual function.
Q. I have read that when women are on estrogen and progesterone they need less cortisone, so when they come off estrogen and progesterone wouldn't they need more cortisone?

A. I have not seen any relationship between cortisone dose in Addison's disease and use of estrogen and progesterone.

Q. Could being on hormone therapy (estrogen, testosterone, progesterone) affect the outcome of an ACTH test?

A. The answer to the question is no. None of the gonadal hormones affect the ACTH - adrenal axis, and therefore the standard ACTH stimulation test is not affected. The one exception is the use of Megace, a potent progesterone used to improve appetite in cancer patients. This drug can suppress adrenal production of cortisol.