

**Kym Connolly:** Dietitian & Diabetes Educator

[www.dietitiandownunder.com](http://www.dietitiandownunder.com)

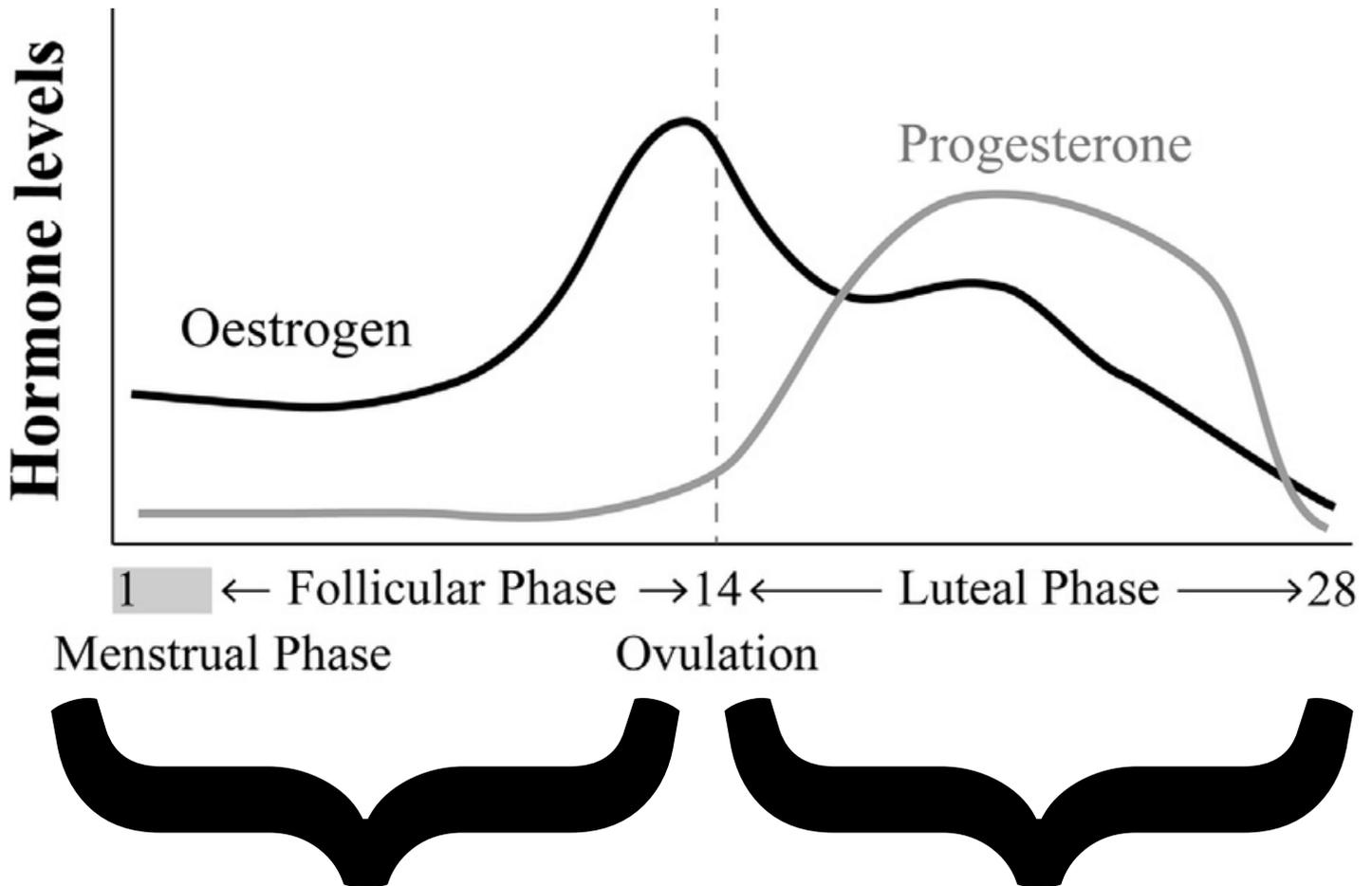
## Topic: Taking a Closer Look At Hormones

Understanding how women's hormones fluctuate throughout their menstrual cycle and at menopause, can give us a lot of insight in regards to why we feel and behave in particular ways!

This is an extremely complicated area of science and due to its complexity there is actually not a lot of research/evidence in this area. However we do know that hormones, in particular oestrogen and progesterone can significantly impact the following:

- Our desire to exercise; our exercise capacity; cravings; our ability to fast; our energy levels; our motivation and ability to stay focused and a whole lot more.

### The Menstrual Cycle



- This is the 'Oestrogen Dominant Phase'
- We are more alert, on the ball, more efficient, can put in 100%, we can work harder physically - it is likely that it is easier to fast and keep carbs really low during this phase and still feel pretty good

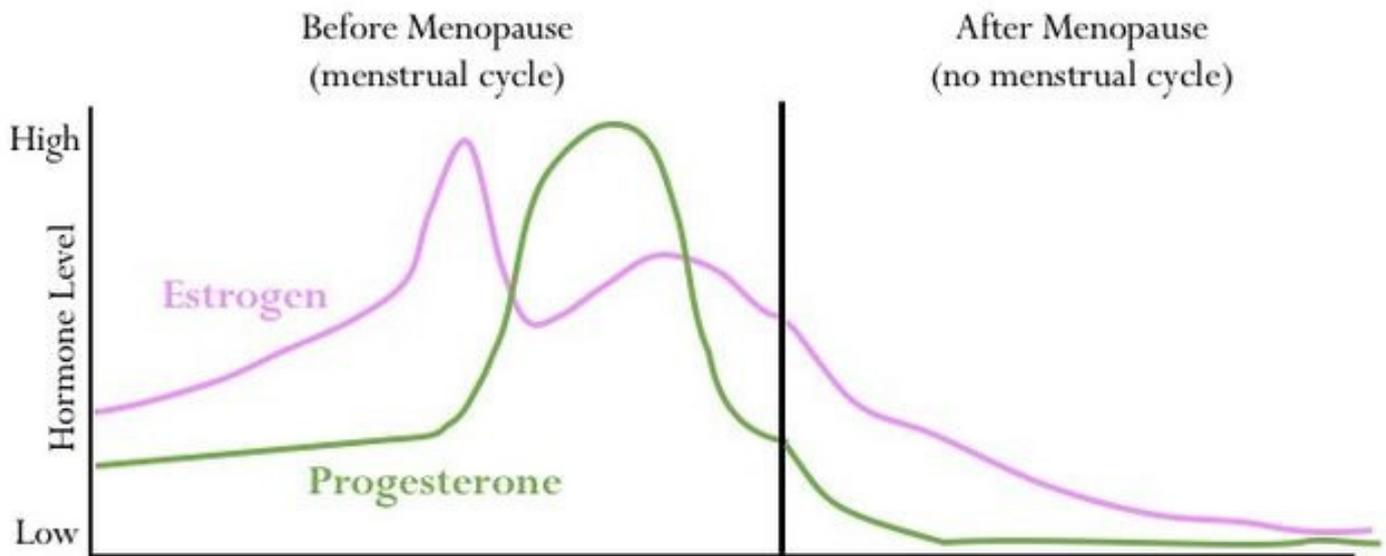
- During this phase oestrogen levels plummet and progesterone increases
- We generally feel flat, fatigued, we crave sugar and/or carbs, we have a decreased desire to exercise

Tracking your cycle and working with your hormones rather than struggling against them can be extremely helpful and can also help you avoid feeling 'bad' about periods during the month where you simply feel less motivated to get 'stuff' done.

You can plan to 'work hard' and get stuff done during the first phase e.g. do higher intensity exercise, longer fasts and push hard to keep carbs low

During the second phase of your cycle, you may prefer less strenuous exercise like yoga, pilates or walking, you may also increase carbs slightly and possibly fast only according to hunger rather than set protocols

### Change of hormones at menopause



**Note:** "Kym has not discussed this phase in her interview, however I feel it is important to note the significant drop in hormones that occurs when you hit menopause. This can of course have huge implications on your motivation, ability to fast, desire to exercise etc. Remember to always be kind to yourself and try and work with your body rather than against it" Vicky

### Hormonal Disruptors

- There are compounds in our diets and in the environment that behave like oestrogen. We call these compounds 'hormone disruptors' as they can attach themselves to the oestrogen receptors in our bodies and thereby block oestrogen. This can result in us being a relatively low oestrogen state!
- Examples of hormone disruptors - BPA; chemicals in our homes; chemicals in make-up and skincare products; pesticides, soy
- What can you do to avoid these? Become informed - know what you are purchasing, avoid BPA, wash fruit and vegetables really well before eating them, spend time in the great outdoors breathing in fresh air!