



Seed Cycling for Hormone Balance

MODULE 5: SELF-CARE EBOOK

© SEM Acne Detectives
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How to Seed Cycle for Hormone Balance

Welcome!

What Is Seed Cycling?

Seed cycling is a gentle way to balance your hormones throughout the two phases of your menstrual cycle using the nutrients found in seeds. By boosting estrogen in the first phase and progesterone in the second phase, seed cycling can help relieve PMS, increase fertility, ease pain from conditions like ovarian cysts, endometriosis, and PCOS, and regulate irregular cycles. It can be effective for women who are menstruating, pre-menopause, postpartum, and post-menopause.

The menstrual cycle is comprised of two main phases:

THE FOLLICULAR PHASE

- Day 1-14 beginning on the first day of your period

THE LUTEAL PHASE

- Day 15-28 beginning right after ovulation

Ancient wisdom says that the follicular phase should begin on a new moon and the luteal phase begins on the full moon, though this doesn't always happen obviously. That's ok, but it's cool when it does. Here's why: a woman's typical cycle is 28 days, which is just about the length of a full lunar cycle. The belief is that we were made to be at peak fertility (ovulation) during the full moon when nights are brightest (so you can see your partner!) and low fertility (menstruation) at the new moon when nights are darkest.



How does Seed Cycling work?

How Does Seed Cycling Work?

FOLLICULAR PHASE (Day 1 -14)

The follicular phase begins on the first day of menstruation.

Estrogen levels start low and steadily increase to prepare for ovulation. To keep estrogen levels in balance, we cycle with flax seeds that contain phytoestrogens that adapt to the body's estrogen needs during this phase. If estrogen levels get too high, the lignans in the flaxseeds can bind to the excess so it can be eliminated from the body. We also cycle with pumpkin seeds, which are high in zinc to support progesterone production in the next phase.

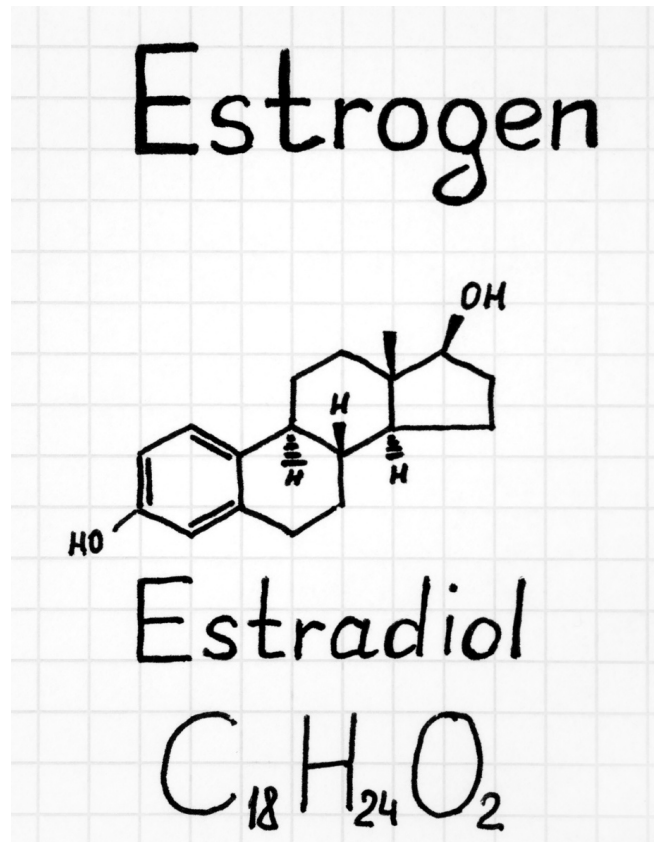
Omega-3 fatty acids are also beneficial during this phase to reduce inflammation and support reproductive functions. Eating lots of high-quality fatty fish (wild!) or taking a high-quality fish oil supplement is encouraged during this phase. If you're vegan, you can use this [algae-based omega-3 supplement](#) instead.

DURING THE FOLLICULAR PHASE CONSUME THESE DAILY

- 1 tablespoon ground flaxseeds
- 1 tablespoon ground pumpkin seeds
- high-quality fish oil (optional)*

*Notes: Ideally, both seeds are consumed ground. However, while the flaxseeds must be ground, the pumpkin seeds can be eaten whole (hulled) if preferred.

Vegan? You can use this [algae-based omega-3 supplement](#) instead of the fish oil.



How does Seed Cycling work?

How Does Seed Cycling Work?

LUTEAL PHASE (DAY 15 – 28)

The luteal phase begins right after ovulation. If you're not 100% sure when that is, start the luteal phase on Day 15 (remember Day 1 is the first day of your period).

This phase is brought on by a sudden drop in estrogen right after ovulation. Progesterone levels begin to steadily rise to build up the uterine lining. Estrogen also increases here to prepare for the menstrual cycle, but if estrogen gets too high PMS symptoms and painful periods can occur. Progesterone is the hormone that keeps estrogen in check, so our focus here is to encourage the body to make progesterone.

During this phase, we cycle with sesame seeds, which are high in zinc and selenium and block excess estrogen, all essential for hormone balance. We also cycle with sunflower seeds, which are high in vitamin E to support progesterone levels.

Quality gamma-linolenic acids (GLAs) are also beneficial during this phase to boost progesterone and reduce inflammation. A high-quality evening primrose oil supplement can be taken during this phase as well for extra GLAs.*



How does Seed Cycling work?

How Does Seed Cycling Work?

DURING THE LUTEAL PHASE CONSUME THESE DAILY

- 1 tablespoon ground sesame seeds
- 1 tablespoon ground sunflower seeds
- evening primrose oil (optional)*

***Note:** Ideally, both seeds are consumed ground. However, while the sesame seeds must be ground, the sunflower seeds can be eaten whole (hulled) if preferred.

Notes About Seeds

Seeds used for seed cycling should be raw, not roasted or seasoned. Organic

is best (always ;)) because the fats in seeds are fragile, they oxidize easily when exposed to heat and light so keep them in the fridge or freezer.

Ideally, grind your seeds right before eating them or store ground seeds in the freezer. Avoid cooking the seeds as many healthy fats and nutrients will become damaged. For best results, eat only the seeds for the particular phase you are in (i.e. don't eat pumpkin seeds during the luteal phase).

If you don't have a 28-day menstrual cycle, don't worry! Many women don't. You can adjust the length of time you consume each seed combination based on your cycle length. This is why I highly recommend tracking your cycle and ovulation. It guarantees that you are syncing the correct seeds with each phase of your cycle since ovulation can occur at slightly different times each month.



What seeds do I use?

What Seeds Do I Use?

To seed cycle, you need to supplement with four different seeds: flax, pumpkin, sunflower, and sesame. I also recommend a fifth supplement: evening primrose oil. Evening primrose oil isn't always included in a seed cycling protocol, but I personally think it's incredibly beneficial to incorporate.

FLAX SEEDS

Flax is rich in omega-3 essential fatty acids. The seeds contain estrogenic-like properties that encourage healthy estrogen production, along with lignans that simultaneously block excess estrogen from being produced.

PUMPKIN SEEDS

Pumpkin seeds are rich in omega 6 and zinc; two nutrients that support our sex hormones and encourage reproduction.

SUNFLOWER SEEDS

Sunflower is an excellent source of vitamin e and selenium. The seeds contain lignans that mimic and support progesterone production.

SESAME SEEDS

Sesame is high in vitamin e, and contains the same hormone-balancing lignans as flax. The seeds encourage fertility and support progesterone balance.

EVENING PRIMROSE OIL

Evening primrose oil naturally balances our cycle, particularly encouraging menstrual bleeding. I've found it to be incredibly helpful for those with amenorrhea or very light periods. The oil also reduces PMS symptoms and helps regulate our emotions.



What if you have an irregular or missing period (AMENORRHEA)?

What if you have an irregular or missing period (AMENORRHEA)?

It's possible to seed cycle even if you have irregular or missing periods. Instead of rotating with the phases of your cycling, you'll follow the phases of the moon a general guideline. In this case, day 1 of your cycle would begin with the new moon.

Days 1-14

(new moon to full moon), eat pumpkin seeds and flax seeds.

Days 15-28

(full moon to new moon), eat sunflower seeds and sesame seeds.



It may seem odd or even a little woo-woo, but the moon is powerful. It controls the waves in the ocean, can affect our center of gravity, and have an effect on your menstrual cycle. Have you ever noticed that the moon and the average menstrual cycle are both 28 days? This is no coincidence. Many women's cycles (when balanced) naturally follow the phases of the moon.

HOW DOES SEED CYCLING SUPPORT HORMONE BALANCE?

In truth, there is little scientific research that supports the direct relationship between seed cycling and improved hormonal balance in women. There just haven't been studies done on this practice. But that doesn't mean it doesn't work! It's important to keep an open mind with nutrition and natural healing practices since there are limitations in research and lack of studies on specific topics.

While studies don't directly link to seed cycling to hormone balance, they show clear correlations that specific nutritional components in flax, pumpkin, sesame and sunflower seeds may play a role in supporting your natural hormonal cycle.

How will Seed Cycling help with fertility and conception?

How will Seed Cycling help with fertility and conception?

Seed cycling balances the two main hormones affecting pregnancy (Progesterone and Estrogen) and as a result, the chances of conceiving naturally are increased gradually. Even if you're opting for assisted reproductive technology, the seed cycle increases your chances of getting positive results.

Production of a healthy egg:

Proteins, fibers, zinc and omega-3 fatty acids present in flax and pumpkin seeds improve the quality of the egg, and also help in the growth of follicles during the first phase of our menstrual cycle.

Implantation of the embryo:

Iron, zinc, the vitamin E, and omega-6 present in sesame and sunflower seeds help in the release of the egg which usually takes place between day 14 and day 18 of our menstrual cycle. Whether we're trying to conceive naturally or using methods like IVF, and IUI a strong endometrial lining is necessary to hold a healthy embryo. Following the seed cycle properly during the second phase of the menstrual cycle adds to the health and strength of the endometrial lining.

Controlling the levels of progesterone:

If the levels of progesterone, the male hormone, are high in a female body it can become a cause of which can become a cause of failed conception. The seed cycle helps in controlling the progesterone levels effectively and maintaining a balance between estrogen and progesterone.



How will Seed Cycling help with fertility and conception?

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Decreases insulin resistance:

Insulin resistance in our body leads to high blood sugar levels, which can lead to conditions like Oligomenorrhea, and Secondary amenorrhea. These conditions often become a cause of infertility amongst women. Seed cycling is an effective way of naturally decreasing insulin resistance.

What if my cycle isn't 28 days?

Don't worry if you don't have a 28 day cycles because a lot of women don't! You can adjust these days based on your cycle length. So if your cycle is 30 days, you'll do 15 and 15. Or if your cycle is 32 you'll do 16 and 16.

Also, if you're tracking your ovulation with your temp or ovulation strips, just start the sunflower and sesame seeds the day after you ovulate.

What if my cycles are really irregular or I'm menopausal?

If you're experiencing really irregular cycles or if you're pre or post-menopausal you can still really benefit from seed cycling.

Follow the moon cycles for either situation. It's not a coincidence that the moon cycles are 28 days! Start your day 1 seeds the first day of the new moon then switch 14 days later. The next 14 days will be the waxing moon leading up to the full moon. Then repeat again when the new moon starts again!



How will Seed Cycling help with fertility and conception?

How will Seed Cycling help with fertility and conception?

Fixes your menstrual cycle irregularities without birth control pills. This one might sound obvious, but if you are having problems with your menstrual cycle and want to get pregnant, your options are limited. The most prescribed choice ordinarily is birth control pills. But... birth control pills prevent pregnancy. Seed cycling doesn't.

Can I do Seed Cycling if I am Estrogen Dominant?

If you are estrogen dominant that does not mean that you need to completely eliminate plant based oestrogen's such as flax.

The issue with estrogen dominance is not that you have too much estrogen but that there is an inability to effectively break down and excrete oestrogen. Women need estrogen for healthy menses, breasts, skin and hair. Flaxseeds are pretty remarkable in that they can increase estrogen or block estrogen depending on the needs of your body. That said there are women who don't do well on flaxseeds. My advice would be to give seed cycling a try and keep a journal of your symptoms. That's the only way to know if its for you or not.



Things to know before you start

Things to know before you start

GRIND YOUR SEEDS

Use a coffee or spice grinder to grind the seeds (especially the flax and sesame). This helps your body digest them. That being said, if you aren't able to grind them that okay. Incorporating the seeds is better than not because they aren't ground. The only exception is flax seeds, which your body can't breakdown or absorb if left whole.

USE RAW SEEDS

It's best to use raw (unroasted, unsalted) seeds to ensure they have all of their nutrients intact and nothing was lost in the roasting process. Using organic seeds when available helps reduce pesticide exposure which can disrupt hormones.

STORE IN THE REFRIGERATOR OR FREEZER

The polyunsaturated fats in seeds oxidize and go rancid very quickly, especially in sunlight and warmer temperatures. Keeping the seeds in a cool, dark place like the fridge or freezer to keep them fresh.

TRACK YOUR CYCLE

This is so important! While you can follow the moon phases, it's best to rotate seeds with your unique cycle. In order to do this, you need to track your cycle.



Things to know before you start

Things to know before you start

PRIORITIZE HORMONE BALANCE

Keep in mind that seed cycling isn't a cure-all. Hormone imbalances are often a result of digestive issues, blood sugar imbalances, stress, a lack of dietary fat and protein, lack of sleep, and environmental toxins (like your cleaning and skincare products). You can't expect seed cycling to give you the boost you need without prioritizing good sleep, managing your stress, eating well and staying hydrated and limiting your exposure to hormone-disrupting toxins.



Seed Cycling for Guys

Men can also support their hormones by doing the opposite of the cycle described above.

From the NEW MOON UNTIL THE FULL MOON men should consume:

- 1 Tablespoon of a mixture of sesame seeds and sunflower seeds.

From the FULL MOON UNTIL THE NEW MOON men should consume:

- 1 Tablespoon of a mixture of flax and pumpkin seeds.

Does Seed Cycling work OR is it a myth?

Does Seed Cycling work OR is it a myth?

Seed cycling has been used by women for decades. It's a simple ritual to include nutrient dense foods and support variety in my diet. Anecdotally, I do feel better. But I encourage, like always, you to ask if the seed cycling benefits are true for you.

Over the years I've watched seed cycling increase in popularity with many women touting the benefits they've experienced. I love reading these accounts. There are many anecdotal stories circulating that sometimes paint seed cycling as the “cure all” for any hormonal condition. I

want to be very clear that the practice is a dietary one aimed at supporting your hormones and supplying your body with the nutrients and building blocks to do what it does best.

Some critics have claimed seed cycling is a myth because you can't find a study that uses the term “seed cycling.” The lack of evidence isn't proof that it doesn't support women's hormones, rather, it is only proof that science hasn't asked the question or tried to demonstrate evidence. When it comes to food science and nutrition, we need a lot more humility to discern that we are very early in our understanding of the complex interplay between nutrition and health. Let's not forget that we have only recently discovered the role of the microbiome in our health—organisms that maintain health and are maintained, in part, by the food that we eat.



Does Seed Cycling Work Or Is It A Myth?

Does Seed Cycling Work Or Is It A Myth?

What you will find on [PubMed](#) and cited here are the nutritional benefits of each of the seeds and how they can help create more optimal hormones as part of a holistic lifestyle practice.

It is very important to understand that when seed cycling is used clinically there are other therapies employed as well. You wouldn't expect to skimp on sleep, stop drinking water, never exercise and then just seed cycle your way out of the hormonal chaos that follows.



Seed Cycling for Menopause

Seed cycling can be used post-menopause by following the moon cycle. If you are pre-menopausal and not cycling, start the seed cycle any time you like and do two weeks of each seed rotation, as shown in the below chart.

If you have already entered menopause, you can start applying seed rotation any time you like and keep each seed combination (like flax seed and pumpkin) for one to two weeks, then switch to the other combination (like sunflower and sesame seeds).

Can Seed Cycling help PCOS symptoms?

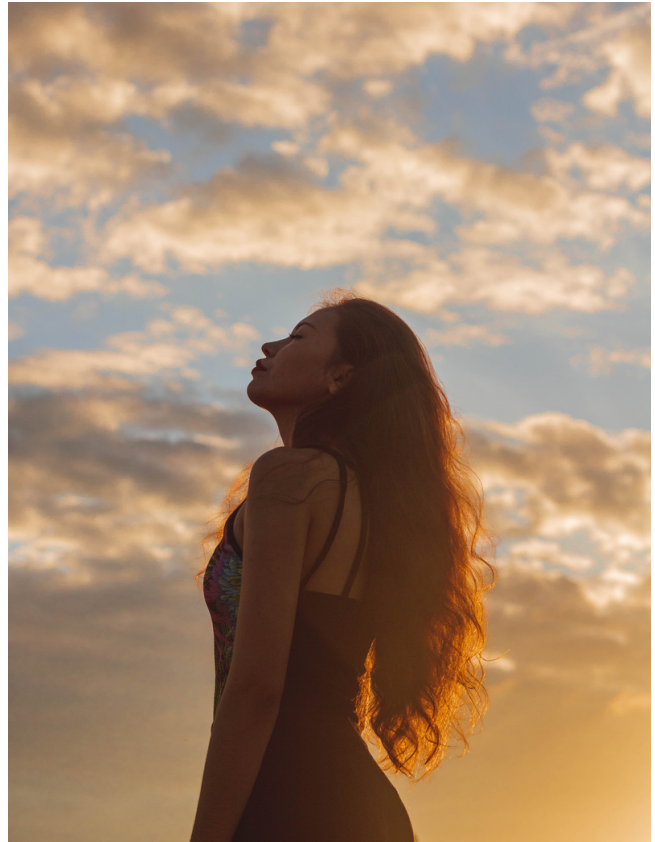
Can Seed Cycling help PCOS symptoms?

For women with PCOS (Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome), the symptoms can range from mild, to frustrating, to embarrassing. While seed cycling for PCOS alone will not alleviate all the symptoms, it can help by supporting healthier hormone balance.

Seeds are a great source of zinc, which supports healthy testosterone production. Contrary to common belief, women need testosterone. However, we need it to be balanced. Too much testosterone can be problematic, and this imbalance is common in women with PCOS.

Testosterone is an androgen, and in PCOS, androgens are responsible for the hair loss, acne, and hirsutism (hair growth on the face, chest and abdomen) that is commonly experienced. Research has shown that women consuming flax seeds have more favorable levels of androgens.

Additionally, the fiber provided by these seeds help with estrogen elimination. Estrogen dominance is also common among women with PCOS. This means that estrogen is either too high in relation to progesterone, or that estrogen levels are too high in general.



Can Seed Cycling help PCOS symptoms?

Can Seed Cycling help PCOS symptoms?

Estrogen, like testosterone, is vital for women's health, but too much can cause unpleasant symptoms, such as:

- Irregular, painful, or heavy periods
- Breast swelling and tenderness
- Headaches, migraines
- Weight gain
- Mood swings
- Hair loss
- PMS is often caused by too much estrogen

Therefore, by eliminating excess estrogen (by having regular bowel movements), the hormone can move

into a more balanced state—which is why a fiber-rich diet is so crucial. In addition to helping with more regular bowel movements, flax seeds also support gut health.

They are also rich in essential fatty acids, which support healthy oil production and decrease inflammation. Other nutrients, like zinc, found in these seeds are important for skin health and acne management.

It therefore might be helpful for women to consider seed cycling for PCOS symptoms.



Can Seed Cycling help with acne?

Can Seed Cycling help with acne?

Acne can be caused by a number of factors, including excess testosterone, estrogen dominance, poor gut health, inefficient liver detoxification, and lack of quality nutrients in the diet.

Acne is also common when women come off of birth control due to what is called an androgen rebound, an increase in testosterone production after stopping birth control.

This is where seed cycling comes in. Because acne is often caused by hormone imbalances and poor gut health, seed cycling can be a helpful tool in helping to lessen the severity of



acne. Will it clear up a woman's skin? No. But seed cycling can help hormones start to re-balance, which could lead to fewer breakouts and less acne overall.

This is especially helpful for women struggling with acne after stopping birth control. Being on hormonal birth control causes hormonal mayhem. Similarly, stopping birth control without supporting your body can also cause severe symptoms. I recommend women begin cycling when coming off of birth control.

Is Seed Cycling Safe?

Seed cycling is a safe and effective way to support your hormones and your body. If you have an allergy to seeds then obviously, seed cycling isn't for you. But otherwise, this is a very gentle way to give your body what it needs to bring hormones into balance.



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Thank You...

A Final Note on Seed Cycling

Seed cycling takes time to work with your body. It can take at least three months of daily use to start noticing the benefits. Keeping a journal to track your symptoms throughout the month can help you identify the shifts happening over the months.

You might be wondering, do I have to stick with this for life? The truth is, it's entirely up to you. Seed cycling is such an easy and gentle way to naturally support your hormone balance daily, you may want to consider it. It may feel daunting to think about doing this forever, but once you get into a habit, it may become second nature. I recommend taking it month-by-month. Making a monthly goal to seed cycle makes it feel much more manageable.



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