

Seed Cycling

One of the specialists I consulted with during the peak of my illness was Dr. Amy Neuzil, a naturopathic doctor who practices in the form of remote phone consultations out of Austin, Texas. I had stumbled across her book, [“DIY Health: For Women \(Because Nobody Knows YOU Better Than You Do\)”](#) in my search for answers. Dr. Neuzil was very appealing, as she not only works with multiple clients all over the country who are suffering with similar issues, but she also battles methylation-related issues herself. In addition to her invaluable, firsthand perspective of life with chronic illness, she provided me with a wealth of information and knowledge by introducing a concept that was completely foreign to me: **seed cycling**. This approach involves using different seeds during certain time periods to obtain hormonal balance and enhance intestinal integrity and function.

Seed cycling takes an average of three to four months of implementation to achieve the intended effect of an ideal hormone balance as well as improved intestinal absorption. Personally, I noticed a difference in my digestion and had some symptom relief with the first cycle. *Step 1: Breathe* has a similar time frame of about three to four months to fully implement all of its components. If any individual feels they are still suffering from dysfunctional hormone imbalance after this program has been incorporated, I recommend scheduling a new patient appointment with Dr. Neuzil. She is familiar with some additional homeopathic approaches to address hormonal issues. For me, seed cycling has had a tremendous impact, and I have not required the more aggressive approaches.

Seed cycling is beneficial to everyone, regardless of gender, and provides a wide range of benefits. Some of the conditions it may be particularly helpful for include:

- PMS
- PCOS
- Pre-menopausal
- Acne
- Irregular cycles and abnormal bleeding
- Low libido or depression associated with post-menopausal hormone changes
- Estrogen dominance and any other related testosterone, progesterone imbalance
- Certain genetic polymorphisms (example: the COMT gene is responsible for estrogen processing/detox issues with gut absorption and processing)

The Story Behind the “Cycle”

The timing of the seed rotation is based on the average length of the female menstrual cycle which is 28 days. For men, the same time frame is used because the fertility cycle of a man follows the female cycle. The lunar cycle of the moon is also a 28-day cycle and closely resembles the phases of the reproductive cycle. This is not a coincidence. Although our environment and surroundings have evolved over time and we are now surrounded by artificial forms of light and stimuli, our bodies are biologically programmed to respond to the light of the moon. This is an example of an evolutionary component of our physiology that has remained constant over time. Women’s ovulation is correlated with the full moon phase at Day 13. A full moon gives off the greatest amount of light compared to all other phases which, in nature, allows optimal ability for reproductive mates to “see” and “be seen.” To learn more about the hormones and the normal fluctuations associated with the menstrual cycle as well as the role of methylation, click on this link: [Seed Cycling for Hormone Balance by Dr. Amy Neuzil](#).

Seed cycling, while powerful in its impact, has the added advantage of being easy to initiate and maintain. It is also a very low-cost approach, and its effectiveness is due to the specific seeds chosen for certain phases of the menstrual cycle.

Flax seeds and pumpkin seeds are used during the follicular phase which is about 13 days. Day 1 is the first day menstruation begins through ovulation which, based on a 28-day cycle, would be Day 13. Some females are able to determine their ovulatory window. For those who aren't, use Day 13 to start. After 3-4 months of seed cycling to regulate the hormones, you may be able to determine your actual ovulation period. For the luteal phase - Day 13 through the start of the next cycle - the seeds change to sunflower and sesame.

The seeds used for this are chosen based on the properties they contain. Flax seeds contain high amounts of lignans that are able to serve as binders for the excess estrogen in our bodies, allowing for detoxification and excretion. Pumpkin seeds contain high levels of zinc which has a role in preparing the body for the elevated levels of progesterone that will accompany the second phase of the cycle. Zinc is also needed to prevent estrogen conversion to the harmful forms of testosterone. The sunflower/sesame seed combination is used during the luteal phase and contains a lower amount of lignan and also contains zinc and selenium which both support progesterone production.

Seed Cycling Instructions

In order to balance estrogen, we have to be able to clear it from our bodies. If that process is not happening efficiently, the estrogen will be stored in the gut lining and re-released, leading to estrogen dominance and overall hormonal imbalances (estrogen, progesterone and testosterone). This concept of utilizing the natural benefits of seeds to process and excrete certain hormones, applies to other chemicals and toxins as well. The idea is to provide the extra help to our intestinal lining to help clear the estrogen instead of holding onto it and re-releasing it. This includes low levels of hormones as well (defer to ["Estrogen Dominance and the Gut"](#) for more detailed information)

Assuming a 28-day cycle for the average female, it looks something like this:

Days 1-14 (assumed ovulation point)

1 Tbsp ground flax seeds
1 Tbsp pumpkin seeds

Days 15-28 (the start of your cycle)

1 Tbsp sesame seeds
1 Tbsp sunflower seeds

The flax seeds must be ground in order to serve as a binder in our intestines. Our systems are unable to fully break down intact flax seeds. These are the basic guidelines and can be enhanced depending on individual needs. I have found seed cycling to be very beneficial for my overall digestive health in addition to the immense hormonal benefits. If low levels of stomach acid are an issue, the occasional process of adding an ounce of apple cider vinegar to a full glass of water and drinking before a meal is a very effective way to slowly introduce acid back into the stomach. This will improve digestion and assist in detoxification.

Easy Smoothie Recipe for Seed Cycling – Phase 1 (Days 1-14)

A smoothie is a great way to start the day and also provides a means to easily incorporate seed cycling into your diet. Additionally, it disguises the taste of the seeds, Supergreens Powder or any other supplements you choose to add to your smoothie. The Supergreens Powder is beneficial in that it

provides additional iron, Vitamin K and all the other benefits of leafy green vegetables, especially on those hectic days when life may get in the way of diet. Other than the specific rotation of seeds and the Supergreens Powder (link to the Supergreens Powder on Amazon provided [here](#)), the remaining smoothie ingredients are up to your own personal preference. Here is a simple recipe I like to use:

1 peeled banana

1-½ cups frozen berry blend (cherries, strawberries, blueberries)

1 cup coconut water (see link to recommended brand on Amazon [here](#))

1 tsp Supergreens Powder

1 Tbsp ground flax seeds*

1 Tbsp of pumpkin seeds*

½ cup of ice (optional)

*For Phase 2 (Days 15-28), substitute the ground flax seeds with sesame seeds, and substitute the pumpkin seeds with sunflower seeds.

Below are links to recommended brands of each type of seeds on Amazon:

[Ground Flax Seeds](#)

[Pumpkin Seeds](#)

[Sesame Seeds](#)

[Sunflower Seeds](#)

Options for Enhanced Phase-Specific Supports

1. Add fish oil during Phase 1 on days 1-14
2. Add evening primrose oil during Phase 2 on days 15-28

If your cycle is irregular, start the seeds with the new moon in an effort to establish synchronization. Keeping a journal for the first four months may be helpful in showing how things are evolving and may help pinpoint ovulation.