

Saliva Testing vs. Blood Testing

More than 95% of blood hormones in women and men are bound to specific proteins, which carry them throughout the bloodstream. The remaining amount (approximately 1 - 5%) represents your **free** (or *bioavailable*) hormones. As blood circulates around the salivary glands, your bioavailable hormones (those that are not bound by blood components) freely diffuse through the cells of the salivary gland and into the salivary ducts. Studies in the scientific literature have shown that there is a strong correlation between the levels of "free" hormones found in saliva and the bioavailable levels of hormones found in the bloodstream and tissues. The free portion of the hormone is what exerts an effect on the body. Free hormones can move throughout the body and into the cells of your organs and tissues to perform their designated functions. Protein-bound hormones are not fully biologically active. Some common blood tests only measure total hormone levels - which is the sum of the protein-bound portion *plus* the non-protein bound portion. These blood tests are unable to distinguish how much is free and available, versus how much is bound and unavailable. It is quite possible for a person to have a total hormone level in the "normal" range – yet still have a very low level of free hormone.

Saliva testing is becoming recognized as a non-invasive, reliable, and accurate way to measure free hormone levels and test for hormone deficiencies. Saliva testing only measures unbound (**free**) hormone levels. Saliva testing is more accurate than blood testing for topically administered hormones -- the preferred method for hormone replacement. For more information on saliva testing, visit www.salivatest.com

How often should levels be checked? The goal of saliva hormone monitoring is to assess your level of imbalance and help determine whether hormone replacement therapy or another form of intervention is appropriate. If you are already taking hormones, testing will allow you to adjust your individual dosage, thus optimizing benefits while at the same time helping to minimize risks. Hormone levels should always be assessed initially to establish baseline levels and determine a starting point. Once hormone balance is achieved, check levels yearly. Check more frequently if you are still experiencing symptoms of hormonal imbalance.

Women: Check your Estradiol, Progesterone, Testosterone, DHEA, and Cortisol levels

Men: Check your Testosterone, Estradiol, DHEA, and Cortisol levels

Hormones in saliva are very stable. Samples can be stored at room temperature for extended periods (a week or more) without any loss of activity. Samples are shipped to the testing facility by regular mail – there is no need for special refrigeration. Saliva testing is a covered benefit by some insurance companies – *check with the individual laboratory to find out specifics about insurance coverage*. Patients can avoid any insurance delays by paying the out-of-pocket cost of approximately \$30 per hormone level tested (this is about 70% less than the cost of blood testing). Fees are paid directly to the lab. Apothecary Options recommends ZRT labs (their price as of April 06 is \$30 per hormone level tested).

Apothecary Options receives no financial compensation or kickback for recommending Saliva Testing

Our bodies contain an estimated 60 trillion cells that all must communicate with each other. These cells respond to a special language that is orchestrated by our hormones. Hormones travel throughout the body and enter cells through receptor sites located on the cells. When a hormone attaches to a receptor it is similar to a key opening a locked door. Once inside the cell, the hormone gets to work, flipping switches and pulling levers that regulate mental and physical functions throughout the body. Hormones exist in harmony with each other. When our hormone levels are balanced in the right proportions, the body is happy and stable. When balance is lost, we become more susceptible to disorders and diseases (both physical and mental). Hormone imbalance is associated with every major disease that plagues Western society (cancer, heart disease, osteoporosis, and diabetes) and some medical experts theorize that hormone imbalance is a contributing factor in depression and certain types of mental illnesses.

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