MANAGE YOUR HORMONES LIKE A BOSS
By: Rob Sulaver, aka “That Guy in the Bandana”

Any idea how good life would be if your hormones were perfect? You’d think you could take over the world. No joke. You would literally feel like a superhero. “Clear eyes, full heart, can’t lose” sorta thing. There would be a smile on your face. A lot. And not just because you were shredded. You’d smile because you felt fucking grrrrreaaat. Like Tony the Tiger on prozac. You’d have tons of energy. You’d wake up in the morning without an alarm. You’d skip to work, high-fiving every homeboy on your jolly way. The body of Thor, the energy of the roadrunner, and the libido of Ron Jeremy. Damn, what a life.

Our hormones are uber powerful. They control our mood, our sleep, our strength, our body fat, our energy levels...everything. They are the master puppetteers to our body and mind. But the truly glorious news is that we have a great deal of control over them as well. Yes, our hormones effect everything that we do, but everything that we do, in turn, effects our hormones. It’s a vicious cycle. Our choices, therefore, on a daily basis, have a profound effect on our hormone profile. So if you want to live an unfairly awesome life, start making decisions that give you an unfairly awesome hormone profile.

What hormones do we need more of?

Testosterone, Growth Hormone, and Insulin-Like Growth Factor are our friends (yes, for men and women.)

Maybe you don’t want to be a meat head who crushes Coors Light cans on your forehead (I’m not sure why...but I’m just hypothesizing here.) And maybe you don’t want to be a she-man with a mustache. But higher levels of these anabolic hormones won’t turn you into a raging frat boy or that chick over there (I’m totally into her, for the record) -->

What these hormones will do is increase your lean muscle mass, your energy levels, and your sex drive while decreasing your body fat. They are valuable little troopers and you want to do everything you can to optimize ‘em (naturally of course - don’t injecting artificial hormones into your butt.)
Testosterone is the most well known of the bunch. It’s the male sex hormone / the sweet smell of locker rooms, NASCAR races, and the inside of tanks. Testosterone is famous for a reason - it’s highly anabolic which means it’ll make your muscles and bones bigger and stronger. It’s also responsible for a lot of what happens at puberty (for boys) - the deepening of the voice, the sprouting of the beard, the dropping of the balls. It increases libido - both of the penal and clitoral persuasion. It regulates fertility. It plays a fundamental role in cognitive and physical energy production. Studies have also shown that higher levels of testosterone makes one more likely to have been injured, more likely to consume five or more alcoholic drinks in a day, and more likely to have had a sexually transmitted infection - all of which I would consider additional benefits of increased testosterone (1).

Woman have significantly less plasma concentrations of testosterone (7-8 times less, if you’re a numbers person), but they’re also more sensitive to the hormone. This means that a smaller up-regulation of testosterone can have a more meaningful effect for those with lady parts. (2)

Growth Hormone (GH) is another anabolic hormone. As its name suggests, it sets the stage for growth. It increases protein synthesis so it also makes your muscles bigger and stronger. It increases calcium retention, so it makes your bones bigger and sturdier. It promotes lipolysis, so it makes you leaner (in order to fuel growth.) AND it plays a role in homeostasis and immune function. In other words, it’s does a lot to make your more awesome. Keep in mind that a natural increase in GH will not cause your jaw to protrude or your body to transform into a gorilla beast. Without artificial hormone injections, your body would never do that. Optimizing GH simply optimizes its positive effects. (3)

Insuline-Like Growth Factor (IGF) is a lesser known but equally important hormone that plays a fundamental role in protein synthesis, nerve cell function, time to recovery, and immune protection (3). IGF mediates the role of GH - they work together. Think of IGF as the Robin to GH’s Batman; the Butch Cassidy to GH’s Sundance Kid; the Simon to GH’s Garfunkel. Without it, GH is much less cool.

Okay. So how do we increase the awesome?

Step 1) Don’t eat garbage

"Dis-moi ce que tu manges, je te dirai ce que tu es."

Some French dude with white hair wrote that long before you, or your father, or your father’s father was born. Translation:

“Tell me what you eat and I’ll tell you what you are.”

Or more commonly...
“You are what you eat.”

What you put into your body single handedly defines how you look and feel. Food is a drug, at least in regards to your hormones and it is the most important decision you make. If you ingest a chemical shit storm, you'll look, feel, and perform like a chemical shit storm (as cool as that might sound it’s not a good thing, I assure you.)

The artificial hormones those crazy farmers inject into meat really start to screw with your natural hormone profile. That's why it is essential that your meat is hormone-free. The chemicals they add to fruits and veggies are also endocrine disrupters. That's why it is essential that your produce is organic and conscientiously farmed. Eating a single piece of non-organic fruit isn't going to crush you, but if you constantly subject your body to nasty chemicals, it will eventually hate you. (For the record, I fully recognize that quality food is more expensive. But I consider it a worthy investment.)

Want a good rule to live by: you should be able to see, taste, and pronounce everything that you eat.

**Step 2) LIFT**

Heavy, hard, multi-join, mega-mass exercises that require a boat-load of muscle fiber and a lot of energy. Study after study confirms that resistance training causes a significant up-regulation of our testosterone and IGF levels.

Here are some studies...just so know (or at least think I know) what I’m talking about:


I could list 100 more, but do you really want me to?

Some more science for you: there’s a strong correlation between blood lactate and serum GH concentrations. What does that mean? If you want to spike your GH, your exercise should be not only be heavy, hard, and massive, but your program should
include little rest period. If you sit around and chat between sets, you’re not optimizing your GH production.

Let me be perfectly clear on this: hormone-optimizing training is aggressive. Train aggressively and you’ll feel awesome.

An example of quality, hormone optimizing workout:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sets</th>
<th>Reps</th>
<th>Tempo</th>
<th>Rest</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1) Front squats</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4,0,X,0</td>
<td>120s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1) BB RDL</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>4,0,X,0</td>
<td>30s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2) DB Bench 45º Incline</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>4,0,X,0</td>
<td>60s</td>
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<tr>
<td>C1) Weighted Chin</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>4,0,X,0</td>
<td>30s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2) Ab Rollout</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>3,1,X,0</td>
<td>60s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1) Prowler Drive</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10s on/20s off</td>
<td>A.F.A.P.</td>
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The workout starts with a major compound movement that emphasizes strength and testosterone production. It then moves into a second and third block - still big, tough compound movements but much shorter rest periods. This will help will all of the anabolic hormones. The finisher on the prowler will crush your blood lactate levels and help cap-off GH production.

**Step 3) Get enough sleep**

Sleep has a profound impact on GH levels.

A quick reminder on the science of sleep:

Sleep is divided into two major categories: rapid eye movement (REM) sleep and non-rapid eye movement (NREM) sleep (yes, in REM sleep your eyes rapidly move around like you’re watching a sprightly leprechaun do a shuttle run.) You spend most of the night in NREM sleep and gradually work towards REM sleep every 90 minutes or so. In terms of restorative function, the later stages of sleep are more money (nearly half of your GH is secreted during the third and fourth NREM sleep stages) but you can only get there if you cycle through the initial stages. This means if you want more GH, you need both more sleep quantity and better sleep quality.

You should be shooting for 7-8 hours every night (everyone is a little different, but that seems to be the sweet spot for most people.) You’ll also do yourself a favor if you:
1) Sleep-optimize your bedroom. Try reducing ambient light and noise as much as possible (if you wake up in the middle of the night, you shouldn’t be able to see your hand in front of your face). That means getting some decent blinds and covering up the blinking green lights on your modem.

2) Develop a nighttime ritual. It may sound cheesy, but the body loves repetition. A half hour before you want to fall asleep, turn the lights down, get into your Superman PJ’s (no? only me?), and read some easy fiction. It’s a great way to let the worries of the day fade away and prepare the body for sleep.

3) Go to bed every night and wake up every morning at the same time. You set your inner alarm clock (called your circadian rhythm). It really does work like a charm.

4) Consider some natural supplementation. Magnesium is a great place to start. Most people who workout are deficient in magnesium (which is a central nervous system relaxant - among other things.) Try a few pumps of topical magnesium lotion or oil on your legs before bedtime. You actually absorb the magnesium through the skin (transdermally). This bypasses the digestive system and is an exceptionally effective way to get magnesium into the system. Within 20 minutes, you’ll be ready to pass out. You can get topical magnesium at your local health care store or from a reputable online dealer. This is my favorite: Poliquin Topical Mag.

Bottom line, if you want ideal hormones all day, you need to let them rebuild at night.

I fully recognize that a perfect hormone profile is a lofty promise. I’m also the first to admit that the journey to perfecting your hormones isn’t a simple one. But there is stuff you can do, starting today, to make this fantasy life a reality.

A summary: the 3 pillars to perfect hormones are nutritious food, aggressive training, and quality rest. This is the foundation of a rockstar life.

Start there, stick around, and let’s become more badass together,
Rob

PS. Go over to Facebook.com/BandanaTraining and let me know that you just read this and you thought it was mind-blowing. Or illuminating. Or awesomely awesome. Or whatever else you thought about it.

PSS. Thanks for signing up for my newsletter. That alone increased your testosterone production by 4%. 
