

Around *Your* World in 28 Days

Hormones Steer You on the Road of Life

WRITTEN BY **KENYA McCULLUM**

WE'VE BEEN MYSTIFIED and mortified by it since we first read Judy Blume's "Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret." Our grandmothers warned us that when our monthly friend, or monthly curse, comes calling, nothing in our lives would be the same. Then when we finally got it, we hated it. And we've been dreading it ever since.

But Gabrielle Lichterman, long-time health journalist and author of "28 Days: What Your Cycle Reveals about Your Love Life, Moods, and Potential," wants us to know that our monthly visitor is not such a curse after all.

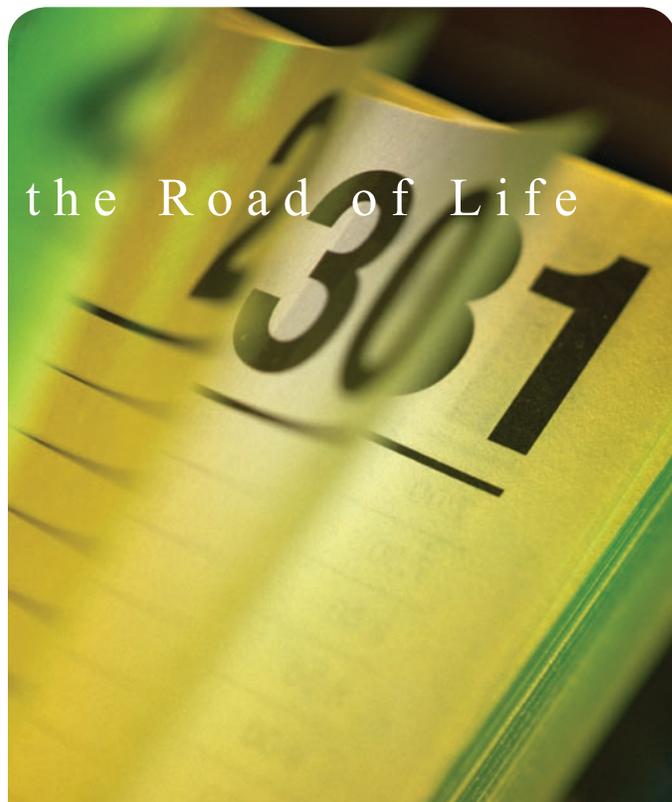
"I think women would be surprised to learn that their period isn't a bad time. I think menstruation has gotten a bad rap," said Lichterman. "When menstruation starts, our estrogen and testosterone start to rise, and not only is that one great cure for PMS, you feel great, outgoing and happy a couple of hours after menstruation starts."

Lichterman should know; she is the founder of *hormonology*, a horoscope that predicts what is going on in our lives based on the time line of our menstrual cycles. While researching a health article in 1999, she stumbled on a study that showed women are more likely to be attracted to masculine-looking men on high estrogen days, while on low estrogen days, they fancy more feminine-looking lads.

Lichterman was fascinated with that idea and subsequently read thousands of articles on how hormones affect our moods and behavior. *Hormonology* puts all of the information and scientific jargon she discovered into a practical, lay guide that can be referenced daily — with some facts about your hormones that may surprise you.

YOUR CYCLE AND COMMERCE

On days 1 to 4 of your menstrual cycle, low estrogen levels will



make you highly susceptible to impulse purchases. Beware of anything placed next to the cash register at the supermarket during that time.

Need to buy a large item? Days 5 to 10 raise your estrogen and testosterone levels, which stimulate your left-brain — the abode of your analytical side. You will seek great bargains on these days.

However, your frugality will disappear on days 11 to 13, as your hormones convince you that the money you just saved is burning a hole in your pocket. Need to buy a new couch or washing machine? Days 14 to 22 of your cycle are ideal because as your progesterone (the nurturing hormone) rises, you feel like nesting and your inner Martha Stewart emerges. And on days 23 to 28 — your PMS days — you will want to buy items that will comfort you.

ON THE ROAD

Throughout our cycle, estrogen makes it easier for us to learn new rules, as well as the ability to judge distance. But when our estrogen rises, we need to be careful of speeding and traffic cops because as the hormone makes us more outgoing, we have the tendency to crank up the tunes and drive like a Leadfoot Lucy.

And speaking of pumping up the volume, the decibel levels of our musical preferences also rise and fall with our hormones. On days 1 to 4, as estrogen begins to rise, we are likely to listen to mid-tempo tunes and pop songs, or songs that are familiar to us. On days 5 to 13, the music we listen to will be louder and louder, until day 14, which makes us lower the volume and listen to comfort music that

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has some sentimental value.

It seems like our hormones are really running the show, doesn't it? Don't worry. Although hormones can affect many aspects of our lives, Lichterman assured that they don't influence all of our decisions.

“Your hormones won't override your intellect,” she said. “I think one of the great myths to squash is that every decision we ever make is because we're PMSing.”

For more information, visit www.hormonology.info. ■

Hormonology for HIM . . .

LADIES, WE'RE NOT THE ONLY ONES affected by hormones, although conventional wisdom would suggest otherwise. For instance, sexists may believe that a woman can't become president because as soon as she has PMS she'll drop the bomb, but men are also susceptible to the influences of hormones.

“Men are equally affected by their hormones,” said Lichterman. “If you say that women are more likely to drop the bomb during their premenstrual days, you have to say that men are more likely to push the button in the morning.”

Why the morning? That's when a man's testosterone levels are at their highest, which increases his aggression and confidence. As the day progresses, a man's tes-

tosterone levels gradually decrease, making him more and more mellow.

Lichterman said that with this in mind, you could apply hormonology to your relationship.

Want a favor from your man? Ask him after 4 p.m. when his testosterone is lower and he is feeling more agreeable. But if the favor is moving furniture or fixing your car, schedule it for the morning, when his testosterone is high and physical abilities are strongest.

Feeling frisky? Take your man to an action movie to give his testosterone level a boost — making him feel more amorous — so you can get some action of your own.

But remember, your man has estrogen and

progesterone, too. So if you need to have a heart-to-heart talk with him, have him watch your favorite “chick flick,” which will increase these hormones and make him more receptive to listening.

Men may find all of this hard to believe, but when Lichterman explained the benefits of hormonology, they soon began to see how it can be used in every area of their lives.

“They always start the same way: They think it's complete hogwash before they speak to me and then as soon as we get a couple of sentences in, they're utterly fascinated — they can't believe it and they can't wait to actually use it,” she said. “At first it's very shocking to them. They want to know how to use the information to make their wives happy or to get ahead at work.”