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Voices

# Dear men, please stop calling women 'hormonal'

Women are too often made to feel small by people, typically men, whose bodies go through far fewer changes than ours



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Girls and young women are regularly given the contraceptive pill for a range of issues unrelated to birth control (Getty/iStock)



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OK, so here's the thing – women are hormonal. But so are men. Without hormones, we simply wouldn't function. The basic definition of a hormone is “a regulatory substance produced in an organism to stimulate specific cells or tissues into motion”.

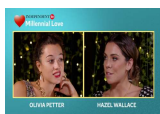
Of course, we have different sex hormones which assist certain functions – female sex hormones are oestrogen and progesterone, while testosterone is the main one for men. But we all have them all, simply in varying quantities.

So, with the science lesson out of the way, why is it problematic to call a woman “hormonal” if it is, in essence, true? Well, too often, “hormonal” is code for “unstable woman”, thus making it unfavourable even when used correctly.

I gave birth to my baby last year and breastfed for over six months. My hormones were, unsurprisingly, haywire as they attempted to settle post-birth. This was at odds with the milk-stimulating hormones. I was, truthfully, hormonal. But when I relayed this to a (female) friend... she was appalled: “Ijeeee, hormonal?”

The word has become so negative that women too turn their noses up at it, even when used by fellow women in the correct context. It's become an insult. And like a lot of the shame-inducing misuse of language regarding women, I blame men.

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Many of us scientifically categorised as “female” go through several hormonal changes throughout a lifetime, in a way that those scientifically categorised as



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that may be different to the ones before, abortions, **menopause** and so much more.

We are too often made to feel small by people, typically men, whose bodies go through far fewer changes than ours.

While this is about the word “hormonal”, it’s also representative of “are you on your period?”, “she needs to get laid”, and “ugh, she’s probably going through the change” – phrases men use to undermine our valid reactions and feelings.

Yes, a woman experiencing her period or menopause is going through a time of hormone fluctuations, but does that mean she’s lost all sense of reason? Hormonal changes affect each woman differently and it’s ludicrous to assume they’ve caused a person to lose their mind, or that their words, behaviour and character are not to be trusted.

When we consider the lasting effects of using this term flippantly and in such a negative manner, it’s clear fundamental change is required. Dismissing a woman’s feelings and behaviour as “hormonal” can leave her self-conscious and lacking confidence, living in fear of being dubbed “crazy” or “unstable”.

An unfortunately common example of a woman’s hormonal needs and health being dismissed as trivial is birth control pills. Girls and young women are regularly given the contraceptive pill for a range of issues unrelated to birth control, including acne, heavy periods and weight control.

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A woman who’d rather remain anonymous spoke of her now ex-boyfriend leaving her with lasting confidence issues which had a knock-on effect on her health. She said: “I was 23 or so and I wanted to go off the pill. I was off it for three or four months and I truthfully was hormonal, as my hormones had to rebalance. But I didn’t understand this.”



“So when [my ex-boyfriend] said ‘you need to go back on the pill – you’re crazy. If

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The changes our bodies go through that are fuelled and assisted by our hormones should be revered and hailed, not mocked, sniffed at or masked by medication. Our bodies are powerful.

So, men, we ask you – nay, implore you – to stop calling women “hormonal”.

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