

YOUR HORMONE HĪKOI™

5 HORMONE CLUES YOU SHOULDN'T IGNORE



by

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The
FemaleGP

Kia ora

Every journey has markers. On a hīkoi (journey), there are bends in the river, changes in the weather, or familiar landmarks that tell you where you are and what's ahead.

Your hormonal journey is no different. From puberty through perimenopause and beyond, your body gives you signs, some loud, some subtle – that show where you are on the path.

Too often, these clues are dismissed as “just stress,” “just getting old,” or “just life.” But when we read them as part of the Hormonal Hīkoi™ a whole-self journey of responsivity, they start to make sense.

This guide shares 5 common clues I see every day in clinic. They are not failings or flaws; they are signals. When you learn to read them, you can walk your hīkoi with more confidence, compassion, and control.

In love, health and understanding,



Sam

Definitions

Clue

A sign or signal your body gives you, often subtle, sometimes loud – that points to what's happening beneath the surface.

General Practitioner (GP)

A General Practitioner. Often seen as “just” a gatekeeper, but in reality a GP holds the whole picture – understanding connections across body systems, life stages, and context. GPs are trained not only in physical health but also in mental health and psychological support – skills that are vital in guiding patients through the complexities of hormonal change.

Perimenopause*

Commonly defined as “the years before menopause when cycles become irregular.” But that misses the bigger picture. Perimenopause is a neuro-hormonal transition; a phase where fluctuating hormones affect body, brain, and emotions long before the last period.

*The current medical definition can be misleading. It frames perimenopause only as “menstrual irregularity,” ignoring the years of hormonal responsivity that affect mood, sleep, cognition, and physical health. This narrow view is one reason so many people feel dismissed or misdiagnosed.

Hormonal

Often used as shorthand for “emotional” or “unpredictable.” Here, we reclaim it. Hormonal means responsive; your body's finely tuned system of signals that affect every cell, every system, every experience. To be hormonal is to be human.

Hīkoi (journey)

A walk, a journey. Here, it represents the path we all take through hormonal change; from puberty to perimenopause, and beyond. Every hīkoi is unique, but shared markers help us find our way.

Whānau (family)

More than family by blood – whānau includes the people, animals, and community who walk alongside us. They are part of the hormonal journey too.

CLUE #1

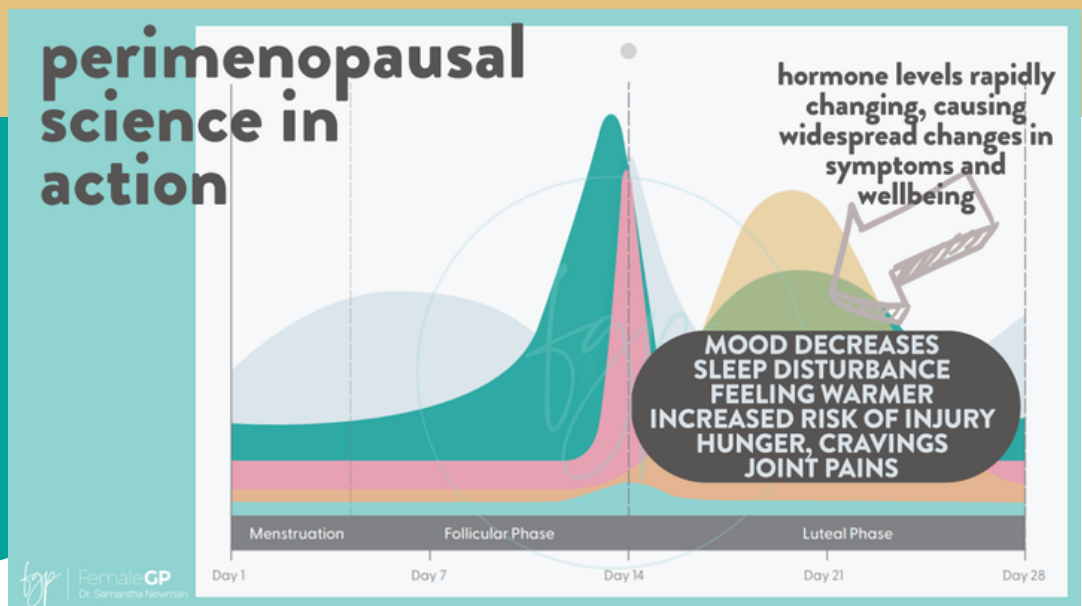
I've got no control anymore.

One minute I'm fine, the next I'm furious, crying, or completely flat. I can't predict myself anymore

The hormone connection

In a typical cycle, estrogen rises twice each month – once before ovulation, and again after – while progesterone rises and falls only if you've ovulated. These shifts usually follow a recognisable rhythm.

But in perimenopause, that rhythm becomes unpredictable. Estrogen surges higher than before, then crashes lower, and progesterone may not rise at all (because ovulation becomes irregular). The result? Bigger swings, less stability, and a rollercoaster that can change from one day to the next.



What can we learn?

This marker tells you it's not weakness, failure or 'being too sensitive' – it's physiology, science.

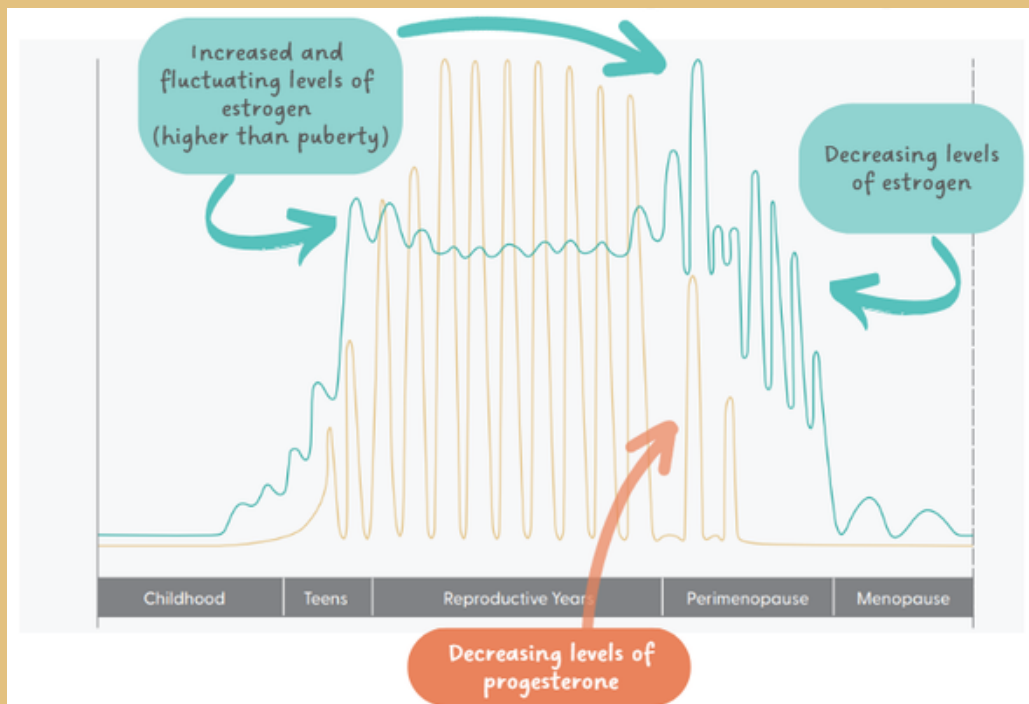
Recognising the cycle of peaks and troughs gives you back a sense of control.

Once you see the pattern, you can plan and adapt.

CLUE #2

I don't feel like myself.

Everything looks fine on the outside, but inside... I just don't feel like me anymore.



The hormone connection

Estrogen and progesterone don't just affect reproduction — they directly influence serotonin and dopamine, the brain's mood and motivation messengers. These hormones shift your physical and psychological wellbeing on a regular basis.

In fact, estrogen rises and falls twice every month in a typical cycle. During perimenopause, those changes become even bigger and more unpredictable — often more intense than what we see at puberty.

So when you look at these feelings through a hormonal lens, it suddenly makes sense. That flatness, anxiety, or disconnection isn't random — it's your brain responding to powerful hormonal swings.

Learn more

In my **Is it My Hormones?** course, we go deeper into how these swings show up in real life, from low mood and brain fog, to disrupted sleep, irritability, anxiety, and even changes in memory. We map out the patterns, so you can see how these symptoms connect rather than feeling like random failures.

CLUE #3

I feel like I'm pregnant again

My breasts are sore, I'm bloated, craving sugar, and peeing all the time – it feels like déjà vu.

The hormone connection

Deeper Dive; where estrogen shows up

- **Bladder** → Estrogen helps the bladder and urethra stay strong and elastic. When levels change, you may notice urgency, frequency even infections.
- **Breast** → Estrogen stimulates breast tissue growth, but without steady progesterone to balance it, tenderness and swelling are common.
- **Vaginal discharge** → With overall lower estrogen, natural lubrication often decreases, so discharge can change or lessen. This can cause pain, infections and sexual issues.

High estrogen is the culprit here. It stimulates breast tissue (causing tenderness), shifts fluid balance (causing bloating and bladder urgency), and builds up the endometrial lining – which is why periods often get much heavier at this stage.

Learn more

In **Is It My Hormones?**, we explore how estrogen affects many systems at once; from periods to breasts, from bladder to digestion and why recognising the pattern is the first step to feeling better.

For practical tools and treatment options, my **Hormone Therapy Decoded** course takes it further, showing how to ease symptoms now and reduce your risk of chronic health conditions in the future.

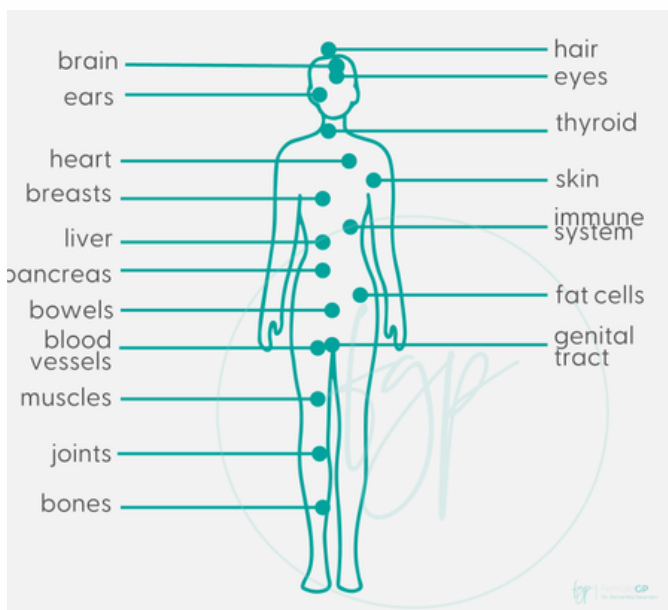
CLUE #4

I keep going to the doctor - more than ever.

I used to hardly see my GP, and now I feel like I'm there every other week with new problems.

The hormone connection

It feels random, but it isn't. Estrogen receptors are found all over the body – in the brain, skin, bladder, bones, joints, breasts, blood vessels, and more. When estrogen levels rise and fall, every one of those areas can respond. That's why symptoms show up in such unexpected places.



Why this matters on the hīkoi

This marker tells you: you're not imagining it. "Weird" symptoms aren't weird at all once you see how many systems are affected by hormonal change.

Learn more

Learn more about how hormones affect your whole body in **Is it my hormones?**. In this course, I walk you through the science of estrogen and progesterone, why their receptors are spread from head to toe, and how this explains the symptoms that seem "random."

Once you see the pattern, you'll never look at your body the same way again.

CLUE #5

I'm putting on weight but nothing else has changed

I swear I'm eating and moving the same, but the kilos are creeping on especially around the middle

The Hormone Connection

Weight changes in perimenopause aren't just about calories. Hormones drive physiology:

- Estrogen helps regulate fat distribution. When it falls, fat tends to shift toward the abdomen.
- Progesterone supports sleep and balances fluid. With less of it, sleep quality drops, leaving you more tired and less resilient.
- Poor sleep raises cortisol, the stress hormone, which in turn increases cravings for quick energy foods.

Deeper dive – insulin

Insulin is the hormone that moves sugar from your blood into your cells for energy. Estrogen helps insulin work smoothly. When estrogen falls in perimenopause and menopause, insulin becomes less effective – a change called insulin resistance. This makes it easier to gain weight, especially around the middle, even if your diet and activity haven't changed.

Reality Check

Everyone says, "It's just diet and lifestyle."

But your physiology has changed. The diet and lifestyle that used to work will no longer fit this stage of life. That doesn't mean you've failed – it means it's time to adapt.

Moving forward

1. Eat more protein → helps stabilise blood sugar, reduce cravings, and maintain muscle.
2. Move more, often → walking or light activity after meals improves insulin sensitivity
3. Lift heavy (strength training) → preserves muscle mass, supports metabolism and protects bones.
4. Exercise for your brain → movement supports mood, reduces stress, improves sleep, and keeps neural connections strong.

If You'd Like to Go Deeper

You don't have to just cope. Understanding your hormones can change the path beneath your feet.

I hope this booklet has helped answer some of the questions you may have been carrying or at least helped you feel less alone in them. If you'd like to go deeper, I've created a comprehensive hormone resource that explores Menopausal Hormone Therapy (MHT), symptom patterns, safety data, prescribing considerations, and what to do when things aren't working as expected.

While it is structured in modules (so some people call it a "course"), it isn't something you need to sit down and complete from start to finish. It's designed to be well-signposted and practical, something you can dip in and out of, return to at different stages, and use as your needs evolve. There are clear chapters, summaries, printable leaflets, and the ability to submit questions. Because hormones aren't one-size-fits-all — and understanding grows over time.

For healthcare professionals, managers, or those working in HR, the resource can also contribute to CPD and workplace education around hormonal health.

If you feel ready for more clarity, more nuance, and more confidence in your decisions, I'd be honoured to walk that next part of the hīkoi with you.



"It is honestly such a well articulated, comprehensive guide to menopause which beautifully demonstrates the art of hormonal health which you have crafted and honed over the years with your wealth of knowledge and experience. I will def share with my colleagues and pt's."

"I think this is going to help a lot of people and give them the courage to make the next step"

"I liked the personal touch of Sam's videos – speaking from her own experiences – made me laugh and cry."

"Absolutely amazing workbook for women to take to a GP appointment."

"I've finished your course and am so grateful for you sharing all your wisdom. It is such a fabulous tool and I hope it gets picked up and goes viral as they say!"



Hormone Health Resources



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This work is built from decades of clinical practice, teaching GPs and allied health professionals across New Zealand, and consistently outstanding feedback from both patients and clinicians.

Is It My Hormones? is the essential foundational resource for midlife women who find themselves asking, “*Why am I feeling this way?*” It provides clear, evidence-based education on reproductive hormones, perimenopause, and the physical and psychological changes that can emerge from the 30s onwards.

Drawing on years of GP experience in women’s health, this resource helps women understand their symptoms, track patterns, prepare for appointments, and engage confidently in conversations with healthcare professionals. It replaces confusion with clarity and turns daunting consultations into informed, empowered discussions.

“

At last! A way to cut through the confusion and get clear, factual information about hormone medication from an actual doctor. After doing this course I felt so much more informed about my options to treat perimenopause symptoms and how to talk to my GP about it.

Eva, Course Graduate

Hormone Therapy Decoded is a comprehensive, practical deep dive into Menopausal Hormone Therapy (MHT). It explores what MHT is, how it works, who it may be appropriate for, and how to weigh benefits and risks using current evidence. It covers different the variety of whole body hormone therapy (estrogen, progesterone, testosterone & vaginal estrogen), prescribing nuances, troubleshooting, absorption issues, special clinical situations, and when to adjust therapy. Designed as a structured but flexible resource, it allows learners to dip in and out of well-signposted modules, return as their needs evolve, and access printable summaries for consultations. It is suitable for both women seeking clarity and healthcare professionals seeking prescribing confidence and professional development.

IS IT MY HORMONES?



Understanding your body. Seeing the patterns. Feeling less alone.

THE EXPERIENCE

Sarah, 39

"I thought I was losing myself."

Her anxiety had returned. She couldn't concentrate. She was snapping at her children, crying over tiny things, and waking at 3am every morning.

Her bloods had been checked.

"Everything looks normal."

She started wondering if she was simply becoming someone she didn't recognise.

But when we stepped back and looked at the bigger picture, something fascinating appeared.

Her symptoms weren't random.

They clustered.

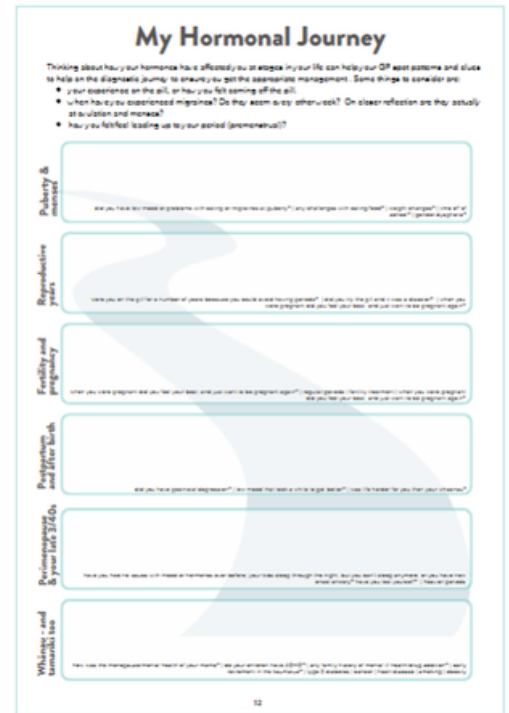
Migraines before her period. Panic attacks after ovulation. Joint pain that came and went. Brain fog before bleeding.

Weeks where she felt like herself again.

For the first time, someone helped her understand the pattern.

Within weeks she told me,

"I don't just feel better... I understand myself."



“ Found it really interesting that intolerance to COC increases chances of postnatal depression!

“ This has helped me make a decision on trying HRT, I can't believe that despite having appointments with my female gp and my gynaecologist over the last 5 years, neither of them ever mentioned menopause as being a potential cause for my symptoms.

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

- How hormones influence your health from puberty to post-menopause.
- How to recognise patterns rather than isolated symptoms.
- Why timing often matters more than a single blood test.
- How hormones interact with sleep, mood, ADHD, migraine and overall wellbeing.
- How to understand your own hormonal responsiveness.
- How to prepare for appointments, communicate your story, and engage confidently in conversations with healthcare professionals.



Understanding your options. Making confident decisions.

THE EXPERIENCE

Anna, 46 years

"I'd tried hormone therapy... but I still didn't feel like myself."

Anna was using transdermal estradiol with a Mirena, but she still wasn't sleeping well. Her migraines continued, her motivation had disappeared, and she wondered whether hormone therapy simply wasn't going to work for her.

She spent hours searching online.

- Should I increase my oestrogen?
- Is my Mirena enough? Do I need progesterone?
- Would testosterone help?
- Am I doing something wrong?

The more she learnt, the more confused she became.

We stepped back and looked at her story.

Together we discovered:

- The estradiol wasn't being absorbed
- Her migraines followed a hormonal pattern - ovulation and premenstrual
- Feeling her best during pregnancy was an important clue.
- Her cravings worsened with her migraines

Rather than simply changing prescriptions, she began to understand why her body responded the way it did.

Over the following months:

- She slept better.
- Her migraines became less frequent.
- Her motivation and energy returned.
- She felt empowered to make informed decisions for her health

This isn't about telling you which hormone therapy to use. It's about helping you understand the science behind the options, the benefits and risks, and why treatment should always be individualised.

HORMONE THERAPY DECODED HELPS YOU UNDERSTAND:

How to start hormone therapy.

What to expect and why.

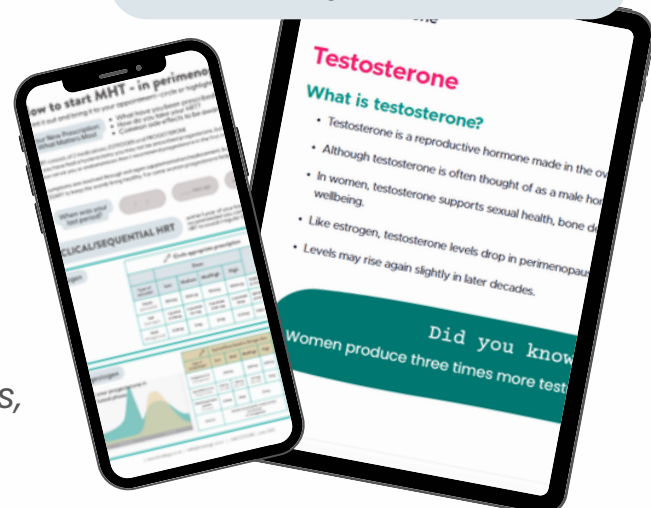
When it needs time to work.

When it isn't working and what to do next.

How to personalise treatment for your body and your goals.

**Because hormone therapy
isn't one-size-fits-all.
Neither are you.**

“I'm so glad I did both of your courses and it has given me confidence to ask for what I need. Ngā mihi ki a koe



Why learn with FemaleGP?

COMBINING EVIDENCE, EDUCATION & YOUR STORY FOR INFORMED, INDIVIDUALISED HEALTHCARE.



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Dr Samantha Neumann



Women's health is evolving rapidly.

New research is emerging every month, recommendations continue to change, and there is rarely a single "right" answer for every woman.

That's why my goal isn't simply to teach facts.

It's to help you understand the why behind your symptoms and treatments, so you can have informed conversations and make confident decisions alongside your healthcare team.

IN THE BUNDLE YOU WILL RECEIVE:

- A downloadable workbook – *your Hormonal Hīkoi*
- Practical worksheets, symptom trackers and resources for even more information.
- Appointment planners and question prompts.
- Clear, concise summaries of the latest evidence.
- Practical tools you can return to whenever you need them.
- Opportunity to ask questions

YOUR QUESTIONS MATTER.

If you've wondered about something, there's a good chance someone else has too.

At the end of every lesson you'll have access to a discussion space where you can ask questions and share your reflections. I'll personally review the discussions and answer questions, helping to turn individual questions into shared learning for the whole community.

**TOGETHER, WE'RE BUILDING
A COMMUNITY THAT'S
CHANGING THE NARRATIVE
OF WOMEN'S HEALTH—
THROUGH KNOWLEDGE,
CONFIDENCE, AND
PARTNERSHIP.**

About me

I'm a Specialist GP. General practice is where whole stories are told, and where real healing begins. I first trained in O&G, drawn to women's health science, but soon realised it wasn't the procedures that drove me, but the stories. Listening, finding the nuances, and helping people connect the dots so they could make their own decisions.

Over time, I noticed a pattern: people came to me at the end of the road; tired, dismissed, told it was "just getting old." When we explored their hormones, things shifted. They began to feel better. That made me ask: what was I seeing that others weren't? The answer lay in the hidden signs beneath the surface. My role is to bring those clues into the light, because once we name them, the path forward becomes clearer.



Alongside being a doctor, I'm a māma to a beautiful daughter who keeps me on my toes, a wife to a husband I wish I saw more of, and human to three fur babies who remind me every day how important animals are as part of our whānau.

I grew up in North London, but Hawke's Bay, Aotearoa is now my forever home. This is where I practice, where I listen, where I learn and where I walk this Hormonal Hīkoi alongside my patients.

My Art of Medicine

Medicine, to me, has always been more than prescribing. It is the careful weaving together of science, lived experience, cultural context, and practical reality. Over years as a GP specialising in women's health and as an Honorary Lecturer at the University of Auckland teaching GPs and allied health professionals I have seen how transformative clear, evidence-based hormone education can be.

My teaching style is grounded, practical, and clinically relevant. I focus on translating complex hormonal science into language that makes sense in a 15-minute consultation and in everyday life. I draw on up-to-date research, real patient scenarios, and a holistic, whānau-centred approach, integrating models such as Meihana to ensure care is culturally informed as well as medically sound.

Across national GP education days and webinars, over **97–98% of participants have rated the sessions as Good or Excellent**, frequently describing them as **comprehensive, empowering, practice-changing, and confidence-building**. Many have shared that the education radically shifted their prescribing confidence and understanding of MHT safety.

Evidence-Based, Without the Noise

Practical and Real-World

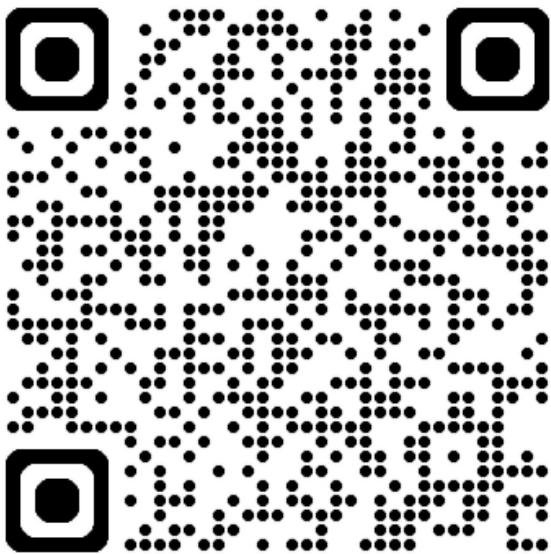
Pattern recognition

The Whole Person



www.femalegp.co.nz

Take me to the Resources



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