Primary hormones (in CAPS) are made by organs by taking up cholesterol ★ and converting it locally to, for example, progesterone. Much less is made from circulating precursors like pregnenolone. For example, taking DHEA can create testosterone and estrogen, but far less than is made by the testes or ovaries, respectively.

Other factors affecting the production of primary reproductive and adrenal hormones:
- Increased Cortisol: stress, inflammation, Cushing’s Disease, obesity
- Decreased Cortisol: glucocorticoid use, opioid use, Addison’s Disease, Accutane, chronic marijuana use
- Increased DHEA: PCOS, acute stress, Bupropion (Wellbutrin), Alprazolam (Xanax), ADD meds
- Decreased DHEA: aging, rapid weight loss, Venlafaxine/Mirtazapine, opioids, medications like Finasteride.
- 5α-Reductase may be affected by some of the above listed things as well (often to a lesser degree).
- 5α-Reductase is best known because it makes androgens like testosterone more potent. It is also responsible for metabolizing progesterone and cortisol. If up-regulated, it may cause high androgen symptoms in men (thinning hair, prostate) and women (as in PCOS, thinning hair, acne, facial hair growth). 5α-Metabolites are less androgenic (weaker).
- 5α-Reductase may be decreased by: Saw palmetto and other medications that contain nettle, pygeum, EGCG, progesterone, zinc, medications like Finasteride.
- 5β-Reductase may be affected by some of the above listed things as well (often to a lesser degree).
- 5β-Reductase may be increased in particular by: High insulin and obesity.
- 5β-Reductase is increased in particular by: Finasteride.
- 5β-Reductase is best known because it makes dihydrotestosterone (DHT) and is involved in the conversion of testosterone to DHT.
- Increased 5α-Reductase is particularly important in prostate health.
- Increased 5β-Reductase is particularly important in hair health.
- Increased 5α-Reductase may cause high androgen symptoms in men (thinning hair, prostate) and women (as in PCOS, thinning hair, acne, facial hair growth).
- Increased 5β-Reductase is less androgenic (weaker).
- 5α-Reductase is best known because it makes androgens like testosterone more potent. It is also responsible for metabolizing progesterone and cortisol. If up-regulated, it may cause high androgen symptoms in men (thinning hair, prostate) and women (as in PCOS, thinning hair, acne, facial hair growth). 5α-Metabolites are less androgenic (weaker).
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Information on this chart is for educational purposes only and is not a suggestion for supplementation with any of the listed items. References available upon request.