



Hormone therapy

Hormone therapy (HT) was formerly known as hormone replacement therapy (HRT). It gives prescribed hormones - estrogen and progesterone or its synthetic form (e.g., progestin). Estrogen given alone is estrogen therapy (ET). This was commonly called estrogen replacement therapy (ERT).

Hormones can be given in many forms: Oral pills; estrogen patches and vaginal creams; and the vaginal ring, Estring.

According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), each woman should consult her doctor about the overall risks and benefits of hormone therapy. Each woman should also discuss non-estrogen treatments with her doctor, too.



RISKS OF HORMONE THERAPY

For some women, hormone therapy may increase their risk for:

- Blood clots
- Heart attacks
- Strokes
- Breast cancer
- Gallbladder disease

For a woman with a uterus, estrogen increases the risk for endometrial cancer (cancer of the uterine lining). Adding progestin lowers this risk.

BENEFITS OF HORMONE THERAPY

- Help prevent fractures caused by osteoporosis (thinning bones)
- Relieves hot flashes and night sweats
- Reduces thinning of the vaginal lining and sagging of the pelvic muscles
- May improve bladder function to help with incontinence

SIDE EFFECTS OF HORMONE THERAPY

- Weight gain or bloating
- Headaches
- Vaginal bleeding
- Breast tenderness
- Depression



SHOULD YOU TAKE HORMONE THERAPY?

Discuss the possible benefits, risks, and side effects with your doctor. The decision should be based on:

- Your age and stage of menopause you are in
- Your personal health history and risk factors for heart disease, osteoporosis, breast cancer, etc.
- Your symptoms and how severe they are
- An understanding of the risks and benefits of HT

A major study concluded that the harmful effects of a specific combination of estrogen and progestin therapy are likely to exceed the chronic disease prevention benefits for most women. If you decide to use HT, use the lowest dose that helps and for the shortest time needed.

When you take HT, consult your doctor about its continued use. You should also have regular medical checkups, as advised. Checkups should include a blood pressure reading, pelvic and breast exams, and a mammogram.



IF YOU CHOOSE NOT TO TAKE HORMONE THERAPY OR ARE ADVISED AGAINST IT

- Have regular checkups with your doctor.
- Ask about medicine alternatives and other ways to reduce the risk of bone fractures and heart disease.
- Follow self-care measures of menopause.
- Follow prevention measures for osteoporosis.