



## Hormone Therapy (HT)

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), the overall risks of HT to women outweigh its benefits. The FDA recommends, though, that each woman consult her doctor about hormone therapy. Each woman should discuss non-estrogen treatments with her doctor, too.

### Risks of Hormone Therapy

Combined estrogen and progestin therapy has been found to increase the risks for:

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

There is no increased risk for uterine cancer if progesterone is given with estrogen. Estrogen without progesterone may increase the risk for uterine cancer.

### Benefits of Hormone Therapy

- Increases bone mineral density and reduces the risk of fractures
- Relieves hot flashes and night sweats
- Reduces thinning of the vaginal lining and sagging of the pelvic muscles
- Improves bladder function. This can help with incontinence.
- May lower the risk of colon cancer and macular degeneration



HT improves spirits in someone with mild depression.

### Side Effects of Hormone Therapy

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



### ***Hormone Therapy (HT), Continued***

#### **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**

- Follow “Self-Care” measures in “Menopause” at [www.HealthyLearn.com](http://www.HealthyLearn.com).
- Follow “Prevention” measures and “Self-Care” measures at [www.HealthyLearn.com](http://www.HealthyLearn.com) for osteoporosis.
- Have regular checkups with your doctor.
- Ask about medicine alternatives and other ways to reduce the risk of bone fractures and heart disease.