

# Natural Hormone Therapy

## **Guidelines for Integrative Hormone replacement Therapy (HRT)**

The Women's Health Initiative (WHI) study was canceled because of a high risk of breast cancer, heart disease and stroke associated with using HRT (hormone replacement therapy). After five years, women using HRT (Premarin and Provera or PremPro) had a 29 percent higher risk of breast cancer, a 26 percent higher risk of heart disease, and a 41 percent higher risk of stroke.

Another study in *The Lancet* (August 8, 2003) involving over a million women in the United Kingdom came up with the evidence that conventional HRT is associated with a substantially greater risk of breast cancer and a greater risk of dying from it. The study found that all types of HRT, including estrogen and progestin combinations, and estrogen alone, increased the risk of breast cancer.

Women nowadays are in a big dilemma: They are scared to go on conventional HRT because of its side effects but at the same time are suffering from the following symptoms: hot flashes, night sweats, occasional sleeplessness, mild mood changes, weight gain, changes in libido, changes in hair and skin, vaginal dryness, etc.

Conventional and alternative medicine have the same goal- to relieve a woman's discomfort during the transitional years of menopause and help her to achieve optimal health into her later years of life. The differences between conventional and alternative medicine begin with their approaches. Conventional medicine often considers menopause as a hormone-deficiency disorder and attempts to correct the imbalances that develop within a woman's hormonal system during and after menopause. One of the disturbing aspects of the conventional approach was that any woman over 50 complaining about anything remotely related to menopause, be put on HRT. They were put on a one-dose-fits-all mindset that might have led to the side effects.

The alternative medical approach focuses on strengthening the female body by encouraging it to balance, regulate, and normalize itself during the transition to menopause. Alternative treatments during menopause usually favor non-drug therapies.

### **So what is the ideal thing that women should do?**

An integrative approach combining the alternative approach with some natural or bio- available hormones combined with alternative therapies is the ideal way to go. There are various rules however to follow to ensure the best outcome:

#### **1) Use of natural or bio-identical hormones:**

Only if the patient needs it and just to bring her to a normal physiological level that corresponds to her age. The natural or bio-identical estrogens or progesterone (Prepared from a plant extract or compounded at a pharmacy) are identical to the ones made in our body. The synthetic ones (made in the lab or obtained from horses) are different from the ones our bodies make and thus are associated with cancer and other side effects.

**2) Measuring and Monitoring body hormone levels:**

Saliva testing is far superior to serum or urine testing in measuring bioavailable hormone levels. The “free” non-protein-bound hormones diffuse easily from blood capillaries into the salivary glands and then into saliva. Protein-bound, non-bioavailable hormones do not pass into or through the salivary gland. Monitoring estrogens and estrogen metabolites is now considered to be a critically important clinical evaluation. It is essential to monitor the ratio of these different metabolites to prevent the side effects of HRT. Some of these metabolites are very beneficial while others are carcinogenic. This is why it is extremely important to work with a health professional who has access to these tests.

**3) Addressing Xenoestrogens and Estrogen Dominance:**

Several symptoms that women refer are due to a relative progesterone deficiency compared to Estrogen. This is mainly caused by xenoestrogens, which we're exposed to through pesticides, plastics, industrial waste products, car exhaust, etc. These estrogen-like compounds compete with its receptors in our bodies and thus produce this apparent estrogen dominance. The best way to detoxify our bodies from their effects is through antioxidants use, infra-red sauna, chelation therapy, etc. Also other hormones related to estrogen, such as thyroid hormones need to be assessed and treated.

**4) Body healing and balancing:**

This is done through dietary, nutritional, and lifestyle changes supplemented by therapies such as acupuncture, herbs, and homeopathic remedies that have been shown to be effective. Examples would be phytoestrogens, flax seed, black cohosh, indole 3 carbinol, glucaric acid, essential fatty acids, CoQ10, etc.

In conclusion some general measures could be sufficient on their own to manage the patients symptoms, but by combining hormone balancing with correction of other environmental and lifestyle factors and appropriate clinical monitoring we hope to treat the real cause for a patient's symptoms and reduce her risk of developing breast cancer, stroke and heart attacks.