

Introduction to HRT and *Menopause*



What is Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)?

The Role of HRT in Managing Menopause Symptoms

TO PROVIDE A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF
HRT, IT'S BENEFITS, RISKS & ALTERNATIVES





What is **HRT**?

Definition

Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) involves supplementing the body with oestrogen (and sometimes progesterone) to relieve menopause symptoms

Types of HRT

Oestrogen-Only HRT: Typically for women who have had a hysterectomy

Combined HRT: Includes both oestrogen and progesterone, or women with an intact uterus to protect against endometrial cancer

Tibolone: A synthetic hormone that mimics the activity of oestrogen, progesterone, and testosterone

Forms of Administration

Pills, patches, gels, creams, implants, and sprays

How HRT Works



Hormonal Balance

HRT helps restore hormonal balance by supplementing oestrogen and progesterone

Symptom Relief

Effective in reducing hot flushes, night sweats, vaginal dryness, and mood swings

Bone Health

Helps maintain bone density, reducing the risk of osteoporosis



Hormones Involved in HRT

Oestrogen

Key hormone for managing menopause symptoms; supports bone health, cardiovascular health and skin elasticity

Progesterone

Used to protect the lining of the uterus when oestrogen is given; balances the effects of oestrogen

Testosterone

Can be prescribed for women to improve libido, energy levels, and muscle mass



The Evolution of HRT

How It Differs from the Past



Old vs New

Old HRT: Higher doses, fewer options, and a one size fits all approach

Modern HRT: Lower doses, bioidentical hormones, and personalised treatment plans

Increased Safety

Advances in HRT have made it safer with more precise dosing and monitoring

Bioidentical vs. Body Identical Hormones

Bioidentical: Often marketed as natural, but not necessarily standardised or regulated; usually compounded in pharmacies

Body Identical Hormones: Regulated and standardised hormones identical to those produced by the body, available through prescription



Effectiveness of HRT



Symptom Control

HRT is highly effective in controlling menopause symptoms like hot flashes, night sweats and vaginal dryness

Quality of Life

Many women report significant improvements in quality of life while on HRT

Long-Term Benefits

If you feel uncomfortable or overwhelmed, your advocate can help express your concerns and ask questions for you

Risks of HRT



Increased Risks (according to research)

Breast Cancer: Slightly increased risk with long-term use, particularly with combined HRT

Blood Clots and Stroke: Elevated risk, particularly in older women or those who smoke

Heart Disease: Risk may vary depending on age, timing of therapy and overall health

Managing Risks

Importance of regular check-ups, personalised treatment plans and starting HRT under medical supervision



Stats on Risks vs Benefits



Breast Cancer

Risk of breast cancer increases slightly after 5 years of combined HRT use (approx. 8 extra cases per 10,000 women per year)

Cardiovascular Health

HRT may reduce the risk of heart disease if started before age 60 or within 10 years of menopause onset

Osteoporosis

HRT significantly reduces the risk of fractures by maintaining bone density

Quality of Life

Inquire about tests for zinc, B12, and iron levels, which are essential for energy and overall health



Where Can You Get HRT?

Prescription HRT

Available through your GP or specialist, offering body identical hormone options

Specialised Clinics

Menopause or women's health clinics provide personalised HRT plans

Compounded Bioidentical HRT

Available through specialised pharmacies, though not always regulated or standardised

Considerations

Always consult with a healthcare provider to determine the best and safest option for you

Can Women Take Testosterone?

Testosterone in Women

Helps with libido, energy levels, and muscle mass

Usage Stats

Approximately 10% of women may benefit from testosterone supplementation during menopause

Forms of Testosterone

Available as gels, creams, or patches specifically formulated for women

Risks and Considerations

Must be monitored by a healthcare provider to avoid side effects like acne, hair loss, and voice changes



How to Discuss HRT with Your Doctor

Prepare Your Questions

Write down your symptoms, concerns, and any questions about HRT

Be Honest About Your Symptoms

Clearly communicate how menopause is affecting your life

Ask About Your Options

Discuss all available treatments, including HRT and non-hormonal options

Express Your Concerns

Share any worries you have about the risks or side effects of HRT

Request a Personalised Plan

Work with your doctor to create a plan that suits your individual needs

What If You Don't Feel Supported?



Seek a Second Opinion

If you're not comfortable with your doctor's advice, consider consulting another healthcare professional

Specialised Menopause Clinics

Visit a menopause or women's health clinic for more focused care

Online Resources

NHS: Reliable information and guidelines on menopause and HRT

British Menopause Society: Evidence based resources and support for women going through menopause

Menopause Experts: Comprehensive articles and community support for women navigating menopause

International Menopause Society (IMS): Global resources and research on menopause management

Support Groups

Connect with other women through local or online menopause support groups for shared experiences and advice



Alternatives to HRT

Lifestyle Changes

Diet and Exercise: Maintaining a healthy weight, regular physical activity, and a balanced diet rich in calcium and vitamin D

Stress Management: Techniques like yoga, meditation, and deep-breathing

Non-Hormonal Medications

SSRIs and SNRIs: Effective for hot flushes and mood swings

Gabapentin: Can help with hot flushes, especially at night

Clonidine: May reduce hot flushes and night sweats

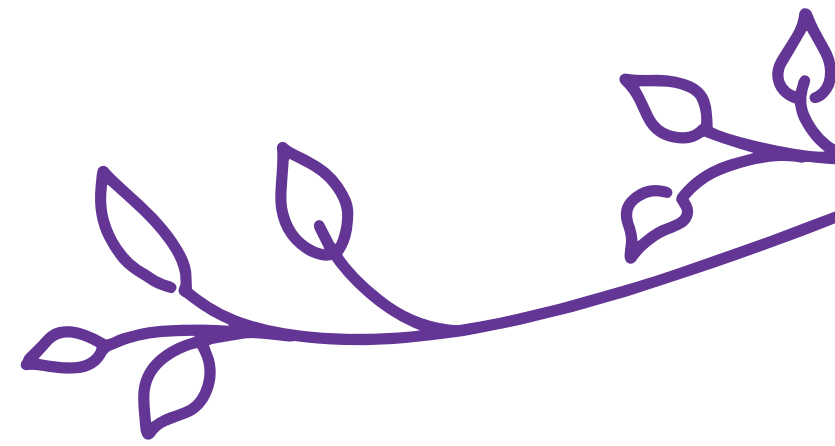
Natural Remedies

Phytoestrogens: Plant based oestrogens found in soy and flaxseed

Black Cohosh: Herbal supplement thought to relieve hot flushes

Evening Primrose Oil: May help with hot flushes and breast tenderness

Summary and Next Steps



Key Points

Understanding the role of HRT in managing menopause symptoms, its benefits, risks and alternatives

Consult a Healthcare Provider

Always discuss your options with a healthcare provider to find the best solution for your individual needs

Stay Informed

Continue to educate yourself on menopause and treatment options

You Have Options

Whether it's HRT, lifestyle changes, or natural remedies, there are multiple ways to manage menopause symptoms

