

## Why Hormone Replacement Therapy is Not a Healthy Choice

I work with women and men who suffer from hormone imbalances daily. That's all I do. All the time.

Not a day goes by when I don't run into someone who is using Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) to help alleviate their hormone imbalance suffering. Some use prescription HRT, some, thinking that they are better off, use bio-identical, and even compounded HRT. In fact, there was a time in my life, after I cured hypothyroidism in myself, but still suffered from pituitary tumor symptoms and could not get pregnant, that I tried both—the prescription and bio-identical, compounded hormones.

On both, the symptoms were devastating. I did not feel an ounce better! I felt much worse. Medications pushed my thyroid to underperform again, I was swollen, I could not sleep or breath. The bio-identical progesterone lozenges I was taking, were not much better. The dosage that my ND prescribed to me, if I took it all at ones, within minutes made me feel dizzy, unable to concentrate or to function. I remember sitting by my computer, staring into the space, holding up my head with my hands, because that's all I could do to keep myself from falling over, curling into a ball and praying to be gone from this world.

I got off both, and finally found my natural cure.

But millions of women and men, go through same, or even worse side effects daily without finding theirs.

So, a few questions, regardless of which kind your doctor or your naturopath might have you on, remain the same and must be answered, especially if you are considering going on HRT or are already on it.

Is that that best possible solution for you? Is HRT safe? If not, what are possible long-terms side effects of HRT?

If you have not asked those questions, you should, because the answer will scare you into healing your hormones the right way.

I'm going to cut through all the fluff, because I value your time, and get straight to the point.

Let's start with science.

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### Is Hormone Replacement Therapy Safe?

A 2012 report from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force advises against using HRT to help with hormone imbalances. According to the panel's recommendations, the risks associated with taking HRT outweigh its benefits.<sup>1</sup> This confirms the recommendations the panel made 7 years ago in 2005.

According to the panel, taking combined estrogen/progestin therapy can reduce the risk of bone fractures. But there is no reduced risk of heart disease and an increased risk of breast cancer, stroke, blood clots, gall bladder disease, dementia and urinary incontinence.

According to a data sheet posted on the Task Force's website, for every 10,000 women who take combined HRT each year, 46 fractures are avoided, but eight women will develop breast cancer, nine will have a stroke, nine may develop serious blood clots in the lungs, 20 may develop gall bladder disease, 12 may develop a serious blood clot in their legs, 22 may develop dementia, and 872 may develop urinary incontinence. So to potentially avoid 46 fractures, HRT has the potential to induce serious disease in 1042 women.

It is almost amazing that these drugs are allowed to remain on the market.

What makes these statistics even more egregious is that there is a risk-free method for developing strong bones – eat well, exercise, and enjoy the sun. These strategies also reduce the risk of other diseases women do not want to get, and also address the reason women are still willing to take them – they reduce uncomfortable symptoms associated with menopause and other hormone imbalances.

### Hormone Replacement Therapy Increases Risk of Ovarian Cancer

According to information taken from the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition, women who take hormone replacement therapy have a significantly higher risk of developing ovarian cancer than women who do not take these drugs.<sup>3</sup>

The reality is that ovarian cancer is rare, but it is often fatal.

The findings were presented at the American Association for Cancer Research Conference in Philadelphia.

The study included 126,920 post-menopausal women. 45% of the women had used hormone therapy at some time, and 30% were taking it at the time the

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study started. 69% of the women were taking estrogen and progesterone in combination, 18% used estrogen and the others used other hormone products.

After nine years, 424 cases of ovarian cancer had been diagnosed. The researchers controlled for factors like smoking and body mass index, and still concluded that taking hormone replacement therapy increased the risk of ovarian cancer by 29% when compared to women who had never taken it.

The risk was highest in women taking estrogen-only therapy, which is generally prescribed following a hysterectomy, while the risk was lowest in those using estrogen/progesterone combinations.

Many women were made aware of the risk of hormone replacement therapy when the Women's Health Initiative was halted early due to increased risk of cardiac events and breast cancer in women taking the hormones. This has fueled interest in the use of bio-identical hormones, with the assumption that because they are natural they must be safe.

For those who have had a hysterectomy, particularly at a young age, hormone replacement therapy may be necessary for a while. But most hysterectomies are unnecessary, and women should be advised of the risks associated with these procedures. Also, even in cases where hysterectomy can be medically justified (a small minority of cases), it is seldom necessary to remove the ovaries. This is usually done as a prophylactic measure since ovarian cancer is difficult to diagnose.

### Are Bio-identical Hormones Better?

So, if prescription HRT is this dangerous, more and more women are enticed to go on bio-identical hormones, thinking that they are safe, because...well—it's all in the name—because they are called bio-identical.

According to a 2014 presentations made at a meeting of the North American Menopause Society, about 2% of women older than 40 years old are taking some form of bio-identical compounded hormone therapy.<sup>2</sup> It's turned into a big business – someplace between \$1 and \$2 billion per year. But 86% of women who are taking these hormones do not know that the drugs are not FDA-approved, and 27% don't know that the products are compounded.

Bio-identical hormone therapy refers to hormones that are customized for the patient by a compounding pharmacy, based on results of saliva or blood tests. The hormone products are represented as being "better" because they are closer, from a molecular standpoint, to human hormones than their pharmaceutical counterparts.

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The problem is that the methods used to test hormone levels are unreliable, which makes determination of the right dose of hormones a guessing game. Additionally, the products have not been shown to be safe or effective. They are assumed to be safe and effective only because many healthcare providers have represented them as such, and women like Suzanne Somers have given numerous testimonials.

In addition to the lack of evidence for safety and efficacy, there are some known issues that should concern women.

One is that compounding pharmacies have historically not been well regulated. Until 2013, states regulated compounding pharmacies, but when several people died after taking contaminated products, a law was passed strengthening federal regulation of these facilities. This does not inspire confidence in me; federal regulation of drugs, devices, medical practices, and food has continually proven to be incompetent and fraught with conflicts of interest.

Another safety issue is that the progesterone doses in some products may not be high enough to protect women against the risk of uterine and other cancers.

The researchers presenting at the meeting stated that increased interest in compounded hormone products was partly in response to data from The Women's Health Initiative in 2001, which showed that risks outweighed benefits for pharmaceutical hormone replacement therapy (HRT). Before that data were published, 17.9 million women were taking hormones, with a total cost of \$3.9 billion per year.

Surveys show that about 3.7 million women were using HRT in 2013, a big drop from 2001 with an out of pocket annual cost of between \$1 and \$2 billion. There are additional costs too – for doctor visits and tests, and the side effects of taking the hormones.

The fact that it is possible to build a multi-billion-dollar business around a product for which there is no safety or efficacy data, that is prescribed by practitioners who know little about it using unreliable testing methods, is one of the reasons our medical system is dysfunctional.

There is limited data indicating that bio-identical hormones are any safer than pharmaceutical-grade hormones, and studies are not required for these products. In my opinion, women who take these products are taking a significant risk.

Even the most traditional doctors are now telling patients to take HRT drugs in the lowest dose possible for the shortest period of time because of the risks

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associated with them. The absence of safety data on bio-identical hormones makes diet and lifestyle the safest choices for resolving symptoms of hormone imbalances.

### Hormone Therapy at Younger Ages Increases Breast Cancer Risk

The Women's Health Initiative showed that taking hormone replacement therapy in order to address menopausal symptoms is risky; risky enough that the study was ended early because the researchers could not ethically continue to give it to the participants.

What should have happened (in my opinion) is that the use of HRT should have been discontinued, and women should have been instructed to change their diets and lifestyles in order to avoid unpleasant menopausal symptoms. But the medical profession does not work that way, and the drug companies were not about to let their billion-dollar blockbuster drugs fade into obscurity.

Instead, a campaign was started to encourage women who were miserable to take the lowest dose possible of HRT for the shortest time possible. This approach was promoted as being safer.

A study conducted in the UK suggests that this option is not safer.<sup>4</sup>

This study concluded that women at the highest risk of developing breast cancer as a result of taking hormones were actually those who started taking the drugs earlier – before menopause began or just as it began, low doses, for short periods of time.

This study, known as the Million Women Study, involved, as the title suggests, over one million women; in fact, one in four British women between the ages of 50 and 64 during the enrollment period participated.

The researchers reported that in women between 50 and 59 who had never taken hormones, 0.3% per year developed breast cancer. 0.46% per year of the women who started taking combination HRT (estrogen and progestin combined) five or more years after menopause began developed breast cancer. But the occurrence was 0.61% per year in women who started taking these drugs just before or less than 5 years after they began menopause.

The risk was higher even for women who took the drugs for less than five years.

The study has its critics; it is an observational study rather than a randomized controlled trial. In observational studies, people make their own choices, which can result in skewed results – in other words, there may be something different

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about the women who took HRT that caused the differences in outcomes that is not accounted for. However, the Women's Health Initiative was double blinded and showed an increased risk for breast cancer for patient taking HRT, as have several other studies.

The good news is that the risk of breast cancer returns to normal a few years after HRT is discontinued. The risk can be reduced even more if you adopt the kind of diet I teach—low fat, whole foods, plant based.

### Conclusion

The fact that millions of women are willing to take FDA approve and bio-identical hormone replacement therapy drugs while knowing nothing about them is one of the reasons why Americans are so unhealthy. But, since you are listening to this podcast, I know that you will not be one of them, because you are ready to take charge of your own hormone health and do it naturally, so you don't have to put yourself at risk of developing these serious side effects, while trying to relieve symptoms of your hormone imbalance.

Symptom relief is the biggest force driving women to request these drugs from their docs.

And HRT delivers the usual result from drug therapy – menopausal women may feel better almost immediately, but this short-term gain is at the expense of long-term health. With time, their health declines and their risk factors increase. I don't think any women with breast cancer or coronary artery disease resulting from HRT thinks that relief from hot flashes is worth it.

Hormone production has been connected to dietary choices in many studies, which means that hormone imbalances can usually be corrected within reasonable periods of time with the right diet and lifestyle changes. The ones you have already heard about on this podcast.

If your eyes have been opened by what I just shared, as mine once were too, and you are ready to relieve your hormone imbalance, or menopausal symptoms naturally, what you need to do is get into my 5 Step System to Healthy Hormones coaching program ASAP!

If you never heard of it—[email me!](#)

Let's get you feeling better and save your long-term health in the process too.

A quick note—last week, just because I've had enough of this bad science, and because I have seen too much heartache, following some of hormone

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imbalance groups and pages on Facebook, which concentrate on symptoms and medications, instead of viable, simple solutions, I started my own private Facebook group where women and men, who suffer from hormone imbalances can come together to talk about NATURAL means to addressing their issues.

The group is FREE, so you can become a part of it ASAP. I am going to leave a link for it in the description of this podcast, so, click on the link and come on over, to become a part of healthy hormones revolution.

If you are on or not on my email list yet, and you have any hormone imbalance, make sure to get on it right away. Tomorrow I will send out an invitation to my subscribers to attend a **live webinar during which I will talk about healing PCOS, endometriosis or infertility caused by either, naturally.** If you have either of these conditions, or know someone who does, tell them to jet to [www.vegalicious.com](http://www.vegalicious.com) and subscribe, so you will be first to get your invitation.

I will talk to you soon!

## References

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