

WOMEN'S HEALTH TRENDS

Poll: Women Confused About Hormone Replacement Therapy

(NAPSA)—It was perhaps the biggest health story for women in 2002 and will continue to make headlines, yet a nationwide poll finds women are still confused about hormone replacement therapy (HRT).

The poll, commissioned by Partnership for Prevention, a national, nonprofit health policy research organization, shows 27 percent of women ages 55 to 70 said recent reports made them feel more informed about the therapy, but 24 percent said they are left more confused.

HRT has been a hot topic since last summer when researchers with the Women's Health Initiative Study found the risks of taking combined HRT outweighed the benefits for some women. Although women on the therapy had fewer colon cancers and hip fractures than those on placebos, they had more risk of heart disease, breast cancer, blood clots and strokes.

Partnership for Prevention's poll also shows about 70 percent of women said they seek information from a doctor or other health practitioner about treatments for menopause and illnesses that come with aging. Full results are at www.prevent.org.

"The results suggest that women still need help sorting out this information, but they and their doctors aren't communicating as well as they could about an important health issue," said Ashley Coffield, a senior fellow and health policy expert at Partnership.

For years, physicians prescribed combined HRT for disease prevention, not just for the relief



By talking to their doctors, many women can take better control of their own health.

of menopause symptoms such as hot flashes. Medical experts, including the American Heart Association and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, now agree combined HRT should no longer be used to prevent heart disease and recommend caution in using HRT solely to prevent osteoporosis.

There are prevention alternatives. Women can lower their risk of heart disease by eating healthy foods, engaging in physical activity and not smoking. Women who are worried about osteoporosis can increase calcium in their diets, exercise more and consult their doctors about other medications.

"The poll results underscore the importance of the doctor-patient relationship at a time when many older women are hearing a lot of news about combined HRT and wondering whether it is right for them," Coffield said.