

Women's Health **UPDATE**

Weighing The Benefits And The Risks Of Hormone Therapy

(NAPSA)—To take hormones or not to take hormones? Many menopausal women ponder this question.

There is no doubt that hormones can help relieve menopausal symptoms, but recent studies have highlighted the potential risks of hormone therapy (HT).

In 2002, the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) found that prolonged use of HT with estrogen plus progestin caused a slight increase in the risk of breast cancer, heart disease and strokes. A few years later, a new look at the study suggested that certain younger women taking estrogen might actually have a slightly lowered risk of heart disease.

"Since the results of the WHI were first released in 2002, the public has been bombarded with conflicting information on how to interpret the findings," said Nanette Santoro, M.D., Director of the Division of Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. "This is a complex issue and patients should participate in continuous open dialogue with their physicians to arrive at treatment decisions best for their individual needs."

Based on the latest research, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommends that hormone therapy (estrogen plus progestin) be used to relieve the symptoms of menopause at the lowest possible dose and for the shortest amount of time needed to relieve symptoms.

Each woman is a unique individual, so it's important that she discuss the benefits and risks of hormone therapy with her doctor as they apply to her particular situation.



Menopause management: The benefits and risks of hormone therapy are not the same for every woman.

When seeing your doctor, here are five tips to make the most of your visit.

1. Make a list of your symptoms and prioritize them, including how often you have them and how severe they are.
2. Learn about hormone therapy ahead of time.
3. Think about your own comfort level with the benefits and risks of hormone therapy before seeing the doctor.
4. Prepare a list of questions for your doctor.
5. Document your family health history.

Work with your doctor to re-evaluate your treatment choices periodically so that you can confidently make the best decisions to navigate this period of change in your life.

For more information about menopause, visit www.hormone.org.