



WOMEN'S HEALTH

What's The Latest On Hormone Therapy?

(NAPSA)—It's not always easy to translate the latest medical findings into information that helps us live a healthier life.

For example, in light of recent studies, many women are not clear about the risks and benefits of using hormone therapy to treat the symptoms of menopause. As a result, some have even stopped using hormone therapy, leaving health experts concerned about whether these women are taking appropriate steps to protect their health.

At the onset of menopause, changes in hormone levels cause changes in a woman's body. Women's bones often become thinner and lose calcium, which can lead to spine and hip fractures, as well as a curved spine.

Also, they may experience hot flashes, vaginal dryness, night sweats, and painful intercourse.

Furthermore, there is evidence that the incidence of cardiovascular disease begins to rise at this time.

Experts recommend managing menopause symptoms in two phases. In the first phase—for the short term—hormone therapy can reduce bone loss and treat specific menopause symptoms such as hot flashes and vaginal dryness.

Hormone therapy does not protect against heart disease, but it does protect against ongoing bone loss with age.

After the first phase, women should discuss the risks and bene-



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fits of continuing hormone therapy with their doctors.

Experts believe that women who take hormones for less than three to five years, do so with relatively low risk. Women who are concerned about bone loss and are thinking about taking hormone therapy for more than five years, should talk with a doctor to see whether hormone therapy or an alternative treatment is best.

The Hormone Foundation strongly recommends good nutrition, weight loss when needed, regular exercise, alcohol in moderation, and no smoking, as these are important steps to staying healthy and the best ways to prevent disease.

For more resources on menopause and to find an endocrinologist, visit www.hormone.org or call 1-800-HORMONE.