

Menopausal Hormone Therapy

What is menopausal hormone therapy used for?

Menopausal hormone therapy (MHT) is hormone medicine used to treat the symptoms of menopause if symptoms are bothersome and other treatments are not helping.

Menopause is usually part of the aging process. As you get older, your body makes less of the female hormones estrogen and progesterone. Menstrual periods become irregular and eventually you stop having periods.

The decrease in female hormones, particularly estrogen, can cause mild to severe symptoms. The symptoms may come and go. You may have them for a few weeks, a few months, or several years.

MHT can help relieve symptoms such as:

- Hot flashes
- Night sweats
- Vaginal dryness, that can cause discomfort or pain during sex
- Trouble sleeping
- Loss of sex drive
- Mood swings
- Depression
- Memory loss
- Headaches

In addition to treating menopausal symptoms, MHT can help prevent osteoporosis. Osteoporosis is a weakening of the bones that starts around age 35. Weak bones are more likely to break. However, lifestyle changes and other prescription medicines can also help prevent osteoporosis.

You can take hormone medicine as tablets; skin patches; lotion, vaginal tablets, cream, or ring; pellets placed under the skin; or shots.

How does it work?

The man-made forms of estrogen and progesterone replace some of the natural hormones your body no longer makes after menopause.

What else do I need to know about this medicine?

- Hormone therapy may increase your risk for heart disease. It may also increase your risk for stroke, breast cancer, blood clots, some gallbladder problems, and possibly dementia. Also, estrogen taken without progesterone increases the risk of uterine cancer if your uterus has not been removed. You and your healthcare provider should discuss the risks and benefits of MHT for you.

- The risk of serious side effects such as heart attack, stroke, and blood clots while taking this medicine are much higher if you smoke.
- Follow the directions that come with your medicine, including information about food or alcohol. Make sure you know how and when to take your medicine. Do not take more or less than you are supposed to take.
- Many medicines have side effects. A side effect is a symptom or problem that is caused by the medicine. Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist what side effects the medicine may cause and what you should do if you have side effects.
- Try to get all of your prescriptions filled at the same place. Your pharmacist can help make sure that all of your medicines are safe to take together.
- Keep a list of your medicines with you. List all of the prescription medicines, nonprescription medicines, supplements, natural remedies, and vitamins that you take. Tell all healthcare providers who treat you about all of the products you are taking.

If you have any questions, ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for more information. Be sure to keep all appointments for provider visits or tests.

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