

HEALTH ESTROGEN

- It's Your Decision- But First Get The Facts

Your ovaries stop making sufficient estrogen at menopause

As women near the age of menopause -late 40's or early 50's- their ovaries begin to make less and less estrogen. As a result, periods will gradually stop. If a woman has her ovaries removed by surgery, her periods will stop suddenly and she will stop making sufficient estrogen. This is called surgical menopause.

Estrogen loss has dramatic effects on your body

The loss of estrogen can have a dramatic effect on a woman's body. Most women (85%) have some symptoms of estrogen loss at either natural or surgical menopause. These symptoms are real, caused by real changes that are happening in a woman's body. Some of the symptoms can be very uncomfortable. The seriousness of symptoms varies from woman to woman.

Effects of estrogen loss

Hot flashes	Osteoporosis
Night sweats	Vaginal Dryness

Is estrogen right for you?

Estrogen has many positive effects. But like all treatments, it isn't right for everyone. Some women have medical conditions that make them poor candidates for estrogen therapy. Only by talking with her doctor, can a woman decide whether estrogen is right for her.

Here are some common questions and answers for anyone having questions about estrogen. Talk with your doctor today to see if estrogen is right for you.

Are estrogen and breast cancer definitely linked?

There is no proven link. Some studies have suggested a possible increased incidence of breast cancer in those women taking higher doses for prolonged periods of time. The majority of

studies, however, do not link taking the usual doses of estrogen after menopause with an increased risk of breast cancer. But if a woman or anyone in her family has had breast cancer, she should let her doctor know before starting to take estrogen.

Does estrogen cause uterine cancer?

If a woman has not had a hysterectomy, estrogen, given alone, can sometimes cause an overgrowth in the lining of the uterus. In some instances this may lead to a type of cancer in the uterus. Her doctor may prescribe a second medication to prevent the overgrowth of the lining of the uterus, but as with any drug it may involve some chance of side effects.

How to get the most from estrogen

Women and their doctors know best whether taking estrogen is right for them. If a woman decides to take estrogen, she can lower her risks, and get more benefits, by taking some simple steps:

Have a physical exam at least once a year. She should let her doctor know if anyone in her family has had breast cancer or if she has ever had an abnormal mammogram.

Report any side effects to the doctor. By working together, she and her doctor can help make the menopause a healthy experience. NCWN Announces International Literature Prizes

Taking estrogen may help

Fortunately, a woman can relieve or prevent many of these symptoms by taking estrogen. Most women who take estrogen take it in pill form.

Relieves uncomfortable, short-term symptoms

Hot flashes, night sweats, vaginal dryness-many of these uncomfortable symptoms can last for several years. Taking estrogen helps relieve or prevent these symptoms in many women.

Taking estrogen has been proven the single best way to stop hot flashes and night sweats. Relief of night sweats may allow women to sleep better and therefore, the tiredness, nervousness, and depression

related to lack of sleep may be alleviated.

Estrogen loss can lead to vaginal dryness, an uncomfortable effect that may cause pain during intercourse. Estrogen helps prevent vaginal tissue from thinning and improves vaginal dryness.

Prevents serious, long term effects

Osteoporosis is a serious effect of estrogen loss. A certain amount of bone loss happens naturally with age, but it happens at a faster rate in women after menopause. Estrogen taken in a pill for can help prevent bone loss- and lowers your chances of breaking a hip or wrist by as much as 60%.

About the "Life After 45" Series

The "Life After 45" Series is a library of brochures. Each brochure talks about an issue that's important to women's health. They will help a woman understand changes in her body is going through and how to deal with these changes.

Brochures available in the "Life After 45" Series

- Osteoporosis
- Menopause
- Estrogen
- Sexuality After 45
- Fitness and Health
- If You've Had a Hysterectomy

FROM THE FORSYTH COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT...

Many outdoor activities are fairly easy when performed in cooler weather, but they become more stressful and difficult this time of year because of heat and humidity, "You need to give your body an opportunity to adjust to heat gradually."

The following are suggestions for exercising in the heat:

-wear as little clothing as possible. By exposing a large amount of the body, more perspiration can evaporate from the skin allowing the body to cool;

-wear cotton clothing. Cotton lets your body breathe. It is the coolest material because it absorbs perspiration and lets excessive moisture evaporate as you exercise;

-avoid wearing a heavy sweat suit or any type of rubberized suit while exercising in the heat. This type of clothing raises the body temperature to dangerous levels and increases the risk of heat illnesses. It also causes excessive stress on the heart and lungs;

-wear light-colored clothing to reflect the sunlight;

-pick a convenient time to exercise but try to avoid the mid-day hours between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

BE PARTNERS WITH YOUR DOCTOR

Regular Physical Examinations

All women should have yearly physicals, including breast palpation and pelvic examinations.

Regular Mammograms

Mammography is the doctor's most valuable diagnostic tool in detecting breast cancer. Every woman, whether she has symptoms or not, should have a baseline mammogram at age 35. From 40-49, she should have a mammogram every 1-2 years, and every year after age 50. Women at high risk should have more frequent mammograms as recommended by their doctors.

Other Diagnostic Procedures Your Doctor May Use

- **BIOPSY** — Small piece of suspicious tissue is surgically removed and examined microscopically.
- **ASPIRATION** — Fluid is drawn from cyst with needle and syringe.
- **ULTRASONOGRAPHY** — Sound waves are directed toward breast and echo waves analyzed.
- **THERMOGRAPHY** — Picture of temperature patterns.
- **CAT SCAN** — Special computerized X-ray examination.
- **MRI** — Magnetic Resonance Imaging — Uses magnetization and radio frequencies.
- **TRANSILLUMINATION** — Breast is transilluminated with high intensity light.

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