

# HRT Myths Uncovered

Many of the things said about Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) have not been true. This is what the science really says.

## MYTH

## FACT

HRT causes breast cancer

HRT with oestrogen alone is associated with little or no change in the risk of breast cancer. Combined HRT can be associated with a small increased risk however this is related to treatment duration & reduces once HRT is stopped.<sup>1</sup>

HRT has a vascular risk

HRT in any form does not increase the risk of heart attack if started before age 60. HRT as tablets can increase the risk of stroke and DVT though generally the effect is very small. This is avoided by using patches and gels.<sup>1</sup>

HRT causes blood clots

Oral HRT can increase the likelihood of having a blood clot. But being healthy and low risk means that the added effect of HRT is tiny.<sup>1</sup>

HRT is dangerous

HRT will protect the bones<sup>1</sup> and heart,<sup>2</sup> and may help women's memory.<sup>3</sup> This is important if periods stop very early and a factor to consider at the average menopause age.

HRT causes weight gain

There is no evidence that HRT causes weight gain. Women generally have a tendency to gain weight in the middle years, and a healthy diet and exercise are important<sup>1</sup>.

If you need HRT you are beyond getting pregnant

HRT is not a contraceptive and women should continue to use contraception until the age of 55.<sup>1</sup>



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## MYTH

HRT only delays the inevitable

HRT carries the same risks as the pill

Natural methods to treat menopausal symptoms are safer than HRT

Women stop having sex after the menopause

Women need examinations to make sure they can take or need HRT

You can only have HRT for 5 years, whatever age you are

## FACT

HRT effectively manages the symptoms of the menopause and lower doses of HRT continue to work when women are older.<sup>1</sup>

They contain similar hormones but those in HRT are less potent and in lower doses, and may be delivered in different ways so the effects are not the same.<sup>1</sup>

Just because it is natural, doesn't mean it is safe – the studies haven't been done.<sup>1</sup>

Some do, but don't need to. Local oestrogen treatments reverse the vaginal changes and restore comfort.<sup>1</sup>

This usually isn't necessary but a woman's blood pressure needs checking.<sup>1</sup>

HRT may be taken for as long as necessary at the lowest effective dose. This is particularly important for younger women, who should not stop before 50 years of age.<sup>4</sup>



For further information,  
please visit Menopause Matters  
& The Daisy Network

1. NICE Guidelines [NG23] 2015  
2. Cochrane et al, Hormone therapy for preventing cardiovascular disease in post-menopausal women (2015), Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews  
3. V Henderson, Cognitive Changes After Menopause: Influence of Estrogen (2008), Clinical Obstetrics and Gynecology  
4. menopausematters.co.uk/benefit.php



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