



## HRT Information – for women starting or considering starting

### What is HRT

Hormone replacement therapy involves giving oestrogen to provide a stable level instead of the variable oestrogen levels that occur during perimenopause. If you still have a uterus then you also need progestogen.

Oestrogen can be given by patch, gel, spray or tablet.

Progestogen can be given by patch, tablet or Mirena coil.

### Benefits of HRT

HRT is effective for most women at treating hot flushes and sweats.

HRT is effective for some women at treating mood, irritability, brain fog, joint pain, reduced libido or skin changes.

HRT reduces the risk of osteoporosis and (if started before age 60) of cardiovascular disease. It is not recommended to be used only for risk reduction.

### Risks of HRT

Oestrogen HRT tablets increase risk of blood clots (so we usually use patches, gels or sprays).

HRT if started after 60 increases risk of cardiovascular disease (heart attack, angina and stroke), this risk is not increased if started before age 60.

Oestrogen alone HRT increases risk of cancer of the lining of the womb, so MUST be used with progesterone unless you have had a hysterectomy. If you have had a hysterectomy for endometriosis make sure you discuss your risk with your GP.

Combined HRT increases risk of breast cancer, although being overweight or drinking more than 14 units of alcohol per week increase this risk by more than HRT.

### Potential side effects of HRT

Bloating, fluid retention, low mood and breast tenderness are usually related to the progestogen component of HRT and settle with a change of this.

Irregular vaginal bleeding usually settles within 3-6 months. If it persists beyond 6 months see your GP and we will investigate further.

### Lifestyle advice

Manage your weight, aiming for BMI 18.5 – 24.5.

Move regularly, including movement where you are on your feet (walking, jogging etc), which improves heart health and mental health and strengthens your bones.

Aim for alcohol intake below 14 units per week.

Take a Vitamin D supplement of at least 10microg, either all year or from October – April.

Stop smoking. Community pharmacies can give superb support for this.

Attend national screening for cervical and breast cancer.

### More information

[WHC factsheets and other helpful resources - Women's Health Concern \(womens-health-concern.org\)](http://www.womens-health-concern.org) have more detail on all the information above and much more.

<https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/> and [Rock My Menopause - Menopause Information](http://www.rockmymenopause.com) are helpful sources.