

Section 5

Hormone replacement therapy (HRT)



Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) is a treatment used to help with symptoms of the menopause. It replaces the female hormones that are at a lower level.



Oestrogen and progesterone are female hormones that play important roles. Falling levels cause a range of physical and emotional symptoms like hot flashes, mood swings and vaginal dryness.



The aim of HRT is to raise female hormone levels, which can bring relief.

How to get started on HRT



Speak to your local GP practice if you are interested in starting.



You can usually begin HRT as soon as you start experiencing menopausal symptoms and will not usually need to have any tests first.



A blood test to measure your hormone levels may be carried out if you are aged 45 or under and have menopausal symptoms.



Your GP can explain the different types of HRT available and help you choose one that is suitable for you.

Types of HRT



There are two main types of HRT, one for women who still have their womb and one for women who have had their womb removed.



There are several ways that HRT can be taken, including:

- tablets
- a patch
- an implant
- oestrogen gel
- oestrogen spray.



Choosing the right HRT for you



Your GP will talk to you and help you decide which kind of HRT is best for you.



Once you have started HRT, it is best to take it for a few months to see if it works well for you. If not, you can try a different type or amount.



It is really important that you talk to your GP if you have any problems with HRT.

When HRT is not suitable

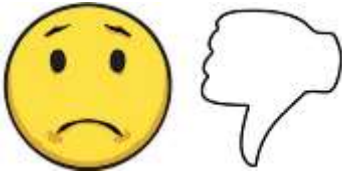


HRT may not be suitable if you have had some health conditions in the past, like some kinds of cancer.



A different type of medication may be given to help manage your symptoms.

Side effects of HRT



Some people feel a bit ill after having medicines. We call these feelings side effects. Hormones used in HRT have side effects.



3 months

Side effects usually get better over time. It is best to try the treatment plan for at least 3 months. If side effects last longer than this, see your GP.

Side effects you can get with HRT include:



- holding fluid



- bloating



- breast tenderness or swelling



- headaches



- indigestion



- depression



- vaginal bleeding.



If side effects do not go away, your GP may recommend a different treatment.

Weight gain



Many think taking HRT will make them put on weight. There is no evidence for this. You may gain some weight during the menopause, but this can happen whether you take HRT or not.



Exercising regularly and eating a healthy diet can help you stay a healthy weight.