

# HORMONE MYTH BUSTING CHECKLIST & FACT SHEET

**BUSTED**

The Hormone Therapy Fact Sheet:  
Quick, Reliable Information

hormonebliss

# WHY DID THEY TELL ME I CAN'T TAKE HORMONES?!?



**The Hormone Therapy Fact Sheet:  
Quick, reliable and maybe even shocking information**

## Hi Sisters!

I know how frustrating it can be to navigate the maze of straight out lies surrounding hormone therapy. It's disheartening to hear the medical narrative often telling **women they don't need or shouldn't take hormones**, without a clear understanding or explanation of which specific hormones they're referring to.



It's crucial to remember that our bodies have **more than 100 different hormones**, each playing a unique role in our well-being: from insulin and thyroid hormones to ghrelin and leptin. Yet, too often, doctors generalize all hormones as “estrogen” to instill fear and discourage you from seeking the therapy you deserve, or they default to “thyroid” and might only check your TSH if you **persistently ask**. This oversimplification does more harm than good, trapping us in a narrative bound by the interests of big pharma, which profits from our inability to balance these renegade hormones wreaking havoc on our lives. There's a pill for an ill that each symptom hormone imbalance creates. Big Money for them!

Understanding the **myths and truths** about hormone balance is not just about making informed choices; it's about breaking free from this narrative and advocating for the care you deserve. This checklist is your tool to navigate these complex waters. It's designed to empower you with the knowledge to help you articulate your needs and concerns to your healthcare provider, and to ensure that the informed consent process is a true reflection of your understanding and needs. Let's dive into each point with the attention it deserves, unraveling the complexities of hormone imbalance and **reclaim control over yo health and life**.

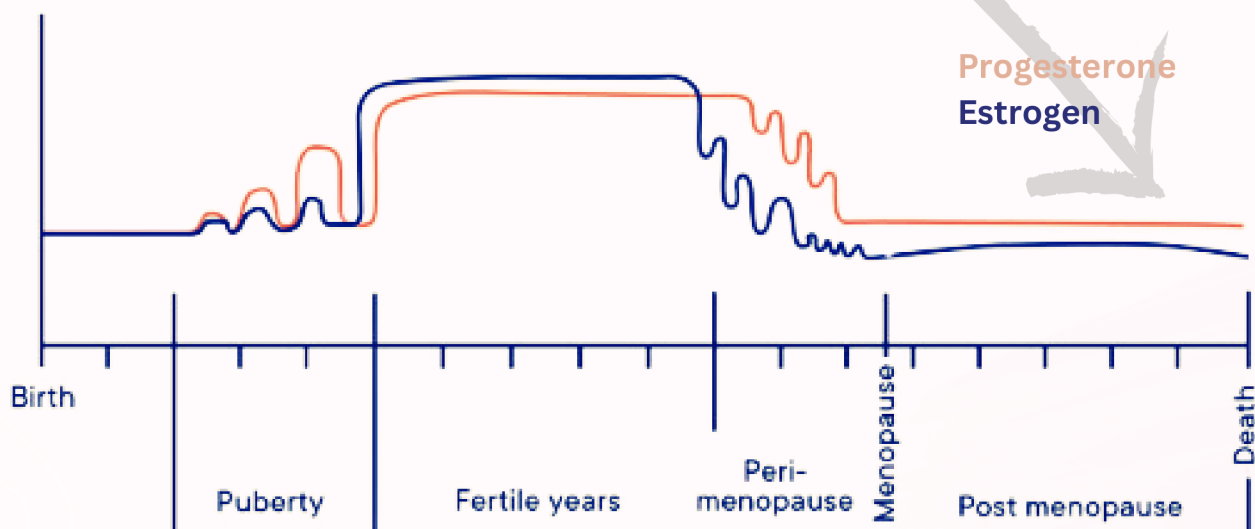
## FAQ

**Q:** What is Menopause?

**A:** Menopause is a natural biological process marking the end of a woman's menstrual cycles. **It's diagnosed after 12 months without a menstrual period and typically occurs in women in their 40s or 50s.** Menopause can bring various physical and emotional changes due to hormonal adjustments in the body.

**Q:** How Long Does Menopause Last?

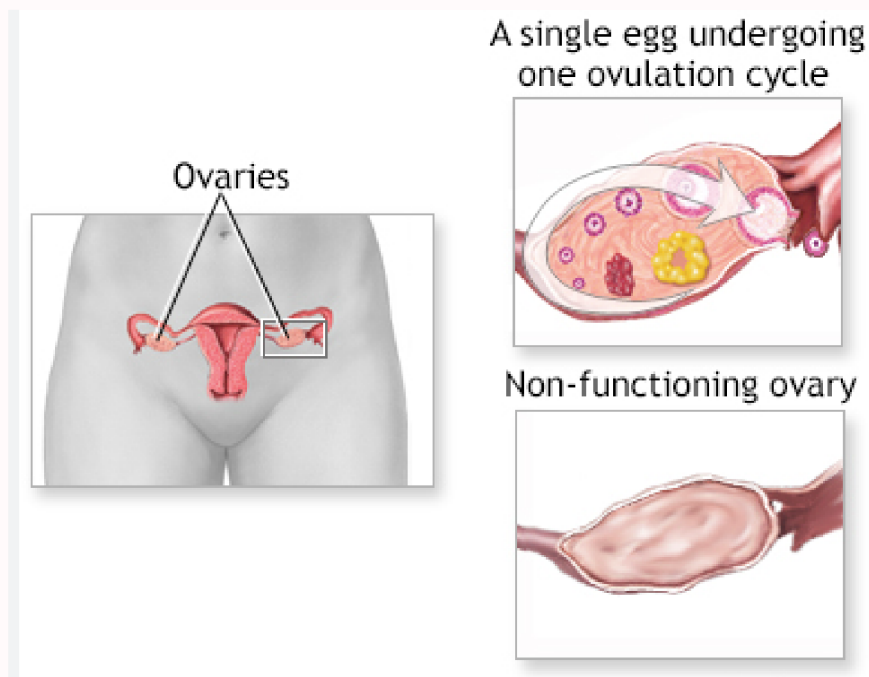
**A:** Menopause itself is a single point in time, marking the end of a woman's menstrual cycles, diagnosed after 12 months without a period. However, the transition to menopause, known as perimenopause, can last several years. The postmenopausal phase, which follows menopause, is a **permanent stage** due to the fact that levels will never resume to pre-menopausal levels without some intervention or hormone therapy. The duration and experience of these phases can vary significantly among women, with perimenopause typically lasting from 4 to 8 years, but can last for 15 years and beyond. While you may adapt to your symptoms over time, the protection of pre-menopausal hormone levels may be lost.



## FAQ

**Q:** What Causes Menopause?

**A:** Menopause is caused by a natural decline in reproductive hormones as a woman ages. As you approach your late 30s, your ovaries start producing less estrogen and progesterone – the hormones that regulate menstruation – and your fertility declines. In your 40s, your menstrual periods may become longer or shorter, heavier or lighter, and more or less frequent, until eventually – on average, by age 51 – your ovaries stop producing eggs, and you have no more periods. Menopause can also be induced by surgery, such as a hysterectomy, or damage to the ovaries, such as from chemotherapy.



**Q:** Why Doesn't My Doctor Know All This Stuff About Menopause?

**A:** The depth of knowledge a doctor has about menopause can vary based on their specialty and experience. While all doctors receive basic training in women's health, those who specialize in areas like gynecology, endocrinology, or integrative medicine often have more detailed knowledge about menopause. Additionally, the field of medicine is vast and constantly evolving, so it's challenging for any one doctor to be an expert in all areas. If you feel your current doctor isn't fully addressing your menopause concerns, it may be beneficial to consult a specialist who focuses on menopausal health and hormone therapy.

# Hormone Therapy Checklist: Understanding Your Options



## ✓ Assess Your Symptoms:

- Note any symptoms you're experiencing (e.g., hot flashes, mood swings, sleep disturbances).
- Rate the severity of these **symptoms on a scale of 1-10** (1 = least: 10 = most).

## ✓ Understand Hormone Therapy **Myths vs. Facts**:

- Read up on common myths about hormone therapy.
- Check off each myth as you learn the corresponding fact.

## ✓ Consider Your Health History:

- List any **relevant personal or family health history** (e.g., risk factors for certain conditions).
- Mark any **previous experiences with hormone-related treatments**.

## ✓ Research Hormone Therapy Options:

- Identify different types of hormone therapies (e.g., **bioidentical vs. synthetic**).
- Check off each type as you learn about its **benefits and risks**.

## ✓ Prepare for a Doctor's Visit:

- Write down questions** to ask your healthcare provider.
- Note any concerns about hormone therapy you want to discuss.

## ✓ Lifestyle Considerations:

- Evaluate **lifestyle factors** that may affect hormonal balance (diet, exercise, stress).
- Check off any changes you can implement to naturally support hormonal health.

## ✓ Post-Consultation Actions:

- Review the information that may be offered by your healthcare provider.
- Decide on next steps: **further testing, a second opinion, or starting a hormone therapy**.

## ✓ Monitor Your Health:

- Keep a log** of any changes in symptoms or side effects.
- Schedule **regular follow-ups** with your healthcare provider.

## Symptoms:

Menopause is a significant transition in a woman's life, and its **symptoms extend far beyond the commonly discussed hot flashes**. The notion that hot flashes are the sole indicator of menopause, and the only symptom warranting hormone replacement therapy (HRT), is not only **reductive but also potentially harmful**. This oversimplification overlooks the complexity of menopausal changes and can lead to inadequate care. It's important to recognize and address the full spectrum of menopausal symptoms, as early intervention can prevent long-term health issues such as osteoporosis, cardiovascular problems, and cognitive decline.

Commonly **Overlooked Symptoms** of Menopause:

1. Mood Swings and Irritability: Hormonal fluctuations can significantly impact **mood**, leading to increased irritability or depression.
2. Sleep Disturbances: **Trouble sleeping** is a common complaint, often not directly associated with hot flashes. It can range from insomnia to disrupted sleep patterns.
3. Weight Gain: Many women experience weight gain, particularly around the abdomen, due to hormonal changes affecting **metabolism** and fat storage.
4. Vaginal Dryness: **Decreased estrogen levels can lead to vaginal dryness**, discomfort, and pain during intercourse.
5. Decreased Libido: Hormonal changes can lead to a **reduced sex** drive or changes in sexual response.
6. Brain Fog: Cognitive changes, often described as '**brain fog**,' can manifest as forgetfulness or difficulty concentrating.
7. Joint Pain: Some women experience **increased joint pain or stiffness** during menopause.
8. Skin Changes: Thinning of the skin and loss of elasticity can occur, often leading to dryness and **wrinkles**.
9. Urinary Problems: Increased **urinary urgency or frequency, plus higher risk of urinary tract infections** can occur due to changes in the urinary tract's lining.
10. Heart Palpitations: Some women report **heart palpitations** or changes in heart rhythm during menopause.

## Why Recognizing Menopausal Symptoms Matter:

Understanding the full range of menopausal symptoms is crucial for several reasons:

- **Comprehensive Care:** It allows for a more **comprehensive approach** to treatment, ensuring that all aspects of a woman's health are addressed.
- **Prevention of Long-Term Health Issues:** Early intervention, including the potential use of HRT, may help prevent osteoporosis, cardiovascular disease, and cognitive decline.
- **Quality of Life:** Addressing these symptoms can significantly **improve a woman's quality of life** during **and after** the menopausal transition.
- **Informed Decision-Making:** Women are **better equipped to make informed decisions** about their health care when they understand the breadth of menopausal symptoms.

It's essential for healthcare providers to listen to and **validate a woman's experiences** during menopause, offering a range of treatment options tailored to that woman's individual needs. Finding a practitioner who is passionate about a woman's health and comprehensive menopausal care is invaluable.

## Why Being Honest With Yourself Matters:

On the journey through menopause, a critical aspect often overlooked is the **honest assessment of symptom severity**. As women, we are frequently the nurturers and caretakers, habitually placing others' needs above our own. This behavior can lead us to minimize our own experiences, often at the cost of our health and well-being. We are taught to endure, to not complain, and to 'pull up our big girl panties and keep going.' But in doing so, are we truly honoring our bodies and what they are trying to communicate?

Consider the analogy of **'boiling a frog slowly'** – if the temperature is raised gradually, the frog doesn't perceive the danger and is eventually overwhelmed. Similarly, as women, we often adapt to increasing discomfort, rationalizing it as a normal part of aging or a necessary sacrifice in our caretaking roles. This minimization, whether stemming from a fear of being perceived as selfish, a lack of awareness due to dissociation from our bodies, or even martyr syndrome, can lead to a significant underestimation of the impact menopausal symptoms have on our lives.

Furthermore, societal messages subtly imply that enduring menopause without assistance, particularly without hormone replacement therapy (HRT), is a **badge of strength**. This notion is as absurd as suggesting that one should endure a major illness without appropriate medication. It's a dangerous message that glorifies suffering and overlooks the potential benefits of seeking help.

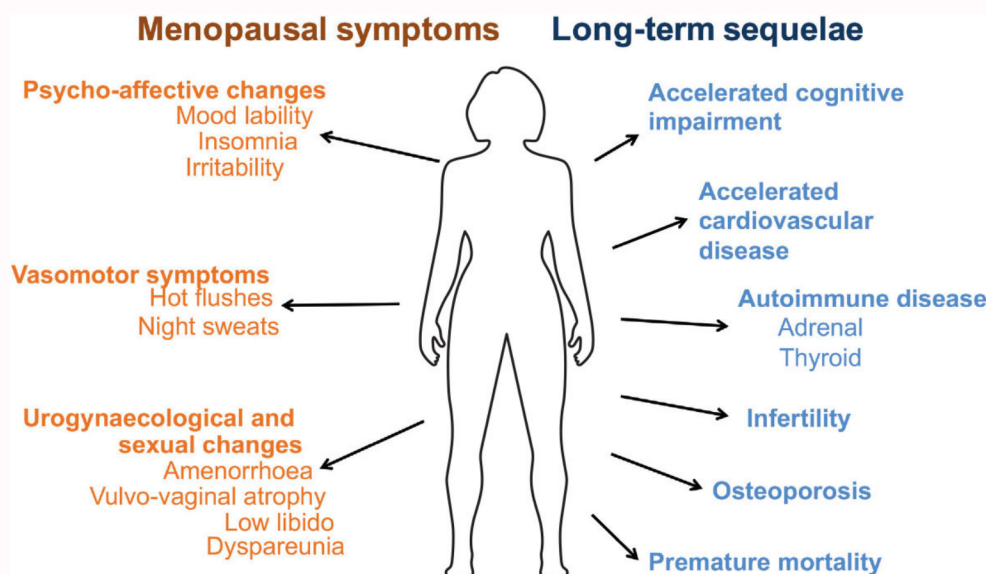


The truth is, acknowledging and addressing menopausal symptoms with the seriousness they deserve is **not** a sign of **weakness**, but of **self-respect and wisdom**. It's about listening to and honoring your body's needs. When considering the severity of your symptoms, it's crucial to step back and objectively evaluate your discomfort. Are you downplaying your experiences? Are you adapting to a level of discomfort that no one should have to endure? Breaking free from these societal and self-imposed expectations is essential. It's time to shift the narrative from endurance to empowerment. Seeking help, exploring options like HRT, and prioritizing your health **is not selfish – it's necessary**. Taking care of yourself is not just about personal relief; it's about maintaining your ability to be there for others, not just as a caretaker, but as a vibrant, healthy individual.

In summary, as you navigate menopause, I encourage you to take a moment to truly listen to your body. Consider the full spectrum of your symptoms and their impact on your life. Don't let societal norms dictate how you experience this significant life stage. **You deserve to approach menopause not just with endurance, but with grace, support, and a sense of empowerment.**

## The Protective Benefits of Hormone Therapy in Menopausal Women:

- ✓ **Cardiovascular Health:** Early initiation of HRT can reduce the risk of heart disease, one of the leading causes of death in postmenopausal women.
- ✓ **Bone Density:** HRT significantly reduces the risk of osteoporosis and fractures by maintaining bone density.
- ✓ **Brain Health:** HRT may lower the risk of cognitive decline and dementia when started at the right time.
- ✓ **Mood and Mental Well-being:** HRT can alleviate mood swings and depression often associated with menopause.
- ✓ **Skin and Hair Health:** HRT helps in maintain skin elasticity and hair health, and may help reduce the signs of aging.
- ✓ **Vaginal Health:** HRT effectively combats vaginal dryness and atrophy, improving comfort and sexual health.
- ✓ **Urinary Health:** It reduces the risk of urinary incontinence, a common issue in postmenopausal women.
- ✓ **Metabolic Function:** HRT can assist in regulating body weight and reducing the risk of diabetes.
- ✓ **Muscle Function:** HRT helps in maintaining muscle strength and reducing the risk of sarcopenia (muscle loss).
- ✓ **Overall Quality of Life:** By addressing various menopausal symptoms, HRT can significantly improve the overall quality of life.



## **This part is REALLY important!**

### **Debunking Common Myths About Hormone Therapy**

The world of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) is riddled with myths and misconceptions, many of which stem from outdated or flawed studies. It's time to shed light on these myths and encourage you to start asking the right questions. Here are five of the most common myths, along with encouragement to delve deeper into the facts:

#### **Myth: All Hormone Therapy Increases Cancer Risk**

**Fact:** Not all estrogens are created equal. There are three primary types of estrogen – estrone, estradiol, and estriol – each with different effects. The blanket association of estrogen with increased cancer risk overlooks the nuances of how different estrogens interact with the body.

#### **Myth: Hormone Therapy is Dangerous for All Women**

**Fact:** The 2002 study that largely influenced this myth used synthetic versions of hormones on women 5 years or more post-menopause, without a balanced approach to other hormones like progesterone and testosterone. This study's design was flawed, yet its narrative persists.

#### **Myth: Hormone Therapy is Unnatural and Unnecessary**

**Fact:** Hormone therapy, especially when bioidentical and tailored to individual needs, can be a natural and effective way to manage menopausal symptoms and improve quality of life.

#### **Myth: Hormone Therapy is Only for Severe Menopausal Symptoms**

**Fact:** HRT can be beneficial for a range of menopausal symptoms, not just severe cases. It can also play a role in preventing long-term health issues related to hormonal decline.

### Myth: Hormone Therapy Will Make You Gain Weight

**Fact:** Many women fear that hormone therapy will lead to weight gain, but this is not necessarily true. In fact, balanced hormone levels may help regulate metabolism and body composition. Hormone therapy, especially when personalized, can actually assist in weight management during menopause.

### Myth: Hormone Therapy Causes Heart Disease

**Fact:** Early studies suggested a link between hormone therapy and increased risk of heart disease, but more recent research indicates that when started at the right time (typically within 10 years from the onset of menopause or before age 60), hormone therapy may actually have heart-protective effects.

### Myth: Hormone Therapy is a One-Size-Fits-All Solution

**Fact:** Hormone therapy is highly individualized. What works for one woman may not work for another. Treatment should be tailored to each woman's unique hormonal needs, health history, and symptoms.

### Myth: If You Don't Have Hot Flashes, You Don't Need Hormone Therapy

**Fact:** While hot flashes are a common menopausal symptom, hormone therapy addresses much more than just this single issue. It can also help with mood swings, sleep disturbances, bone density, and overall quality of life.

### Myth: Hormone Therapy is Only for Short-Term Use

**Fact:** There's a common misconception that hormone therapy should only be used for the short term. However, the duration of therapy should be based on individual needs and health goals. For some women, the benefits of continuing hormone therapy far outweigh the risks, even into their later years.

### Myth: Once You Start Hormone Therapy, You Can't Stop

**Fact:** Hormone therapy should be adjusted or discontinued as needed, under medical supervision. It's not a lifelong commitment and should be personalized based on individual responses and health changes. But the benefits are worthy of a discussion at any age. Doing nothing, could make the difference between aging well or aging poorly.

## Why These Myths Persist:

The persistence of these myths can be attributed to **big pharma agendas that benefit from treating symptoms rather than underlying causes**, a tendency to oversimplify complex medical issues, and many healthcare providers have bought into these misconceptions, often due to outdated information or a lack of specialized training in hormonal health.

**Encouragement to Seek the Truth:** Start asking questions and seeking out credible, up-to-date information. How many other myths about hormone therapy might you uncover? **Understanding the truth about HRT is not just about challenging misconceptions; it's about empowering yourself with knowledge to make informed decisions** about your health. Remember, your body, your symptoms, and your health journey are unique. The more you know, the better equipped you are to navigate this journey with confidence and clarity.

Sometimes, the most profound insights come from simply asking questions guided by your intuition. **Consider this: young women, with their high estrogen levels, have a relatively low risk of breast cancer, while menopausal women, with significantly lower estrogen levels, face a much higher risk.** This observation challenges the oversimplified suggestion that estrogen alone is the culprit. It's not just about the presence of estrogen, but the balance and types of estrogen in our bodies. For instance, estriol, a protective form of estrogen, decreases in menopause, while estrone, known for its proliferative effects, becomes more dominant. Estriol can help mitigate the effects of estrone by binding to the same receptors, reducing estrone's potentially dangerous impact.



## Historical Context of HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy):

The journey of HRT has been complex. Initially hailed for its immediate benefits in the 1960s into the 1990s, until **the 2002 Women's Health Initiative (WHI) study cast a shadow over HRT**, suggesting more risks than benefits. This led to dramatic decline in its use and lingering public skepticism. The initial WHI study's design and reporting had limitations, and its broad conclusions were not entirely representative of the diverse effects of HRT. **However, subsequent reanalyses and studies** have clarified that HRT, particularly when started early in postmenopause or for women under 60, offers significant benefits.

Today, with a more nuanced understanding, HRT is recognized as a beneficial treatment for many symptomatic postmenopausal women, though its usage remains **unjustifiably low due to lingering misconceptions**.



## Consider Your Health History Checklist:

### ✓ Family History of Hormone-Related Cancers:

- Breast cancer
- Ovarian cancer
- Uterine cancer

**Note:** While a family history of these cancers necessitates careful consideration, certain hormone therapies, particularly bioidentical ones, may help in balancing hormones and potentially reduce risks.

### ✓ Personal History of Hormone-Related Conditions:

- Endometriosis
- Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)
- Fibroids

**Note:** Hormone therapy can sometimes alleviate symptoms of these conditions and improve quality of life.

### ✓ Cardiovascular Health:

- History of heart disease
- High blood pressure

**Note:** Properly managed hormone therapy may improve cardiovascular health and reduce the risk of heart disease, especially when started early in menopause.

### ✓ Bone Health:

- Osteoporosis or low bone density
- Family history of osteoporosis

**Note:** Hormone therapy can play a role in maintaining bone density, reducing the risk of osteoporosis and fractures.

### ✓ Neurological Considerations:

- Family history of Alzheimer's or dementia
- Personal history of significant memory changes or cognitive decline

**Note:** Emerging research suggests that hormone therapy, particularly estrogen therapy, may have a protective effect on brain health when started at the right time.

**Additional Notes:** While considering these health factors, it's important to remember that hormone therapy is not a one-size-fits-all solution. The decision to pursue hormone therapy should be based on a comprehensive evaluation of your personal and family health history, current health status, and a balanced understanding of the potential risks and benefits. Hormone therapy, especially when personalized and carefully monitored, can offer significant health benefits and improve overall quality of life.

## Research your options:

### Bioidentical vs. Synthetic Hormones:

**Bioidentical Hormones:** These are chemically identical to the hormones produced by the human body. They are often preferred for their natural composition and are believed to be better tolerated with fewer side effects. Bioidentical hormones can be custom-compounded based on individual hormonal needs, offering a personalized approach to hormone therapy.

**Synthetic Hormones:** These are made from synthetic sources and are not identical to human hormones. While they can be effective in treating menopausal symptoms, they may have different effects and potential risks compared to bioidentical hormones.

### Delivery Methods:

**Pills:** Oral hormone therapies are common but pass through the liver, potentially affecting liver function and cholesterol levels.

**Patches and Gels:** These provide hormones through the skin, offering a more consistent absorption rate and less impact on the liver.

**Compounded Formulations:** Compounded bioidentical hormones can be tailored to individual needs and are available in various forms, including creams, gels, and injectables.

### Advantages of Compounded Bioidentical Hormones:

Custom-compounded bioidentical hormones allow for dosages to be adjusted to the **specific needs of the individual**, potentially reducing the risk of side effects and improving efficacy.

They offer flexibility in addressing a range of symptoms and can be adapted as a woman's needs change over time.

## Practical Solutions:

### Supplements for Women's Health Menopause:

Even if estrogen therapy is not an option, supplements can support overall health. These may include vitamins D and B12, calcium, magnesium, omega-3 fatty acids, and herbal supplements like black cohosh and red clover. Supplements can help manage symptoms like bone density loss, cardiovascular health, and general well-being.

### Beyond Estrogen - A Holistic Approach:

Hormone therapy discussions should not end if estrogen is contraindicated. It's crucial to consider the entire hormonal milieu, including thyroid function and insulin levels.

A comprehensive approach might involve looking at lifestyle factors, diet, exercise, and stress management, alongside hormone levels.

### Importance of Full Conversation:

Personal or family health concerns should not shut down the conversation about hormone therapy. Instead, they should prompt a more in depth discussion and evaluation.

Understanding the full spectrum of hormone therapy options, including the risks and benefits, is essential for making informed decisions.

## **Lifestyle Modifications:**

### **Dietary Balance:**

Incorporate a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains. Limit processed foods, sugars, and excessive caffeine.

### **Healthy Fats:**

Include sources of healthy fats like avocados, nuts, seeds, and olive oil.

### **Hydration:**

Ensure adequate water intake daily.

### **Regular Exercise:**

Engage in regular physical activity, including both cardio and strength training.

### **Stress Management:**

Practice stress-reduction techniques such as meditation, yoga, or deep breathing exercises.

### **Adequate Sleep:**

Aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep each night.

### **Limit Alcohol and Smoking:**

Reduce or eliminate alcohol consumption and avoid smoking.

### **Weight Management:**

Maintain a healthy weight to reduce the risk of hormone imbalances.

### **Mind-Body Connection:**

Engage in activities that promote a positive mind-body connection, such as mindfulness practices or hobbies that bring joy. Each of these items can contribute to a healthier hormonal balance and overall well-being. It's important to regularly evaluate and adjust these lifestyle factors to support your hormonal health journey

## Post-Consultation Actions:

### ✓Review Information Provided:

Carefully go over the details and recommendations given by your healthcare provider. This includes **understanding the proposed treatment** plan, any prescribed medications or therapies, and their expected outcomes and potential side effects.

### ✓Reflect on the Consultation:

Consider how you felt during the consultation. Did you feel **heard and understood**? Were your questions and concerns addressed satisfactorily?

### ✓Research and Educate Yourself:

Take the time to research the information provided. This includes reading up on hormone therapies, understanding different options and learning about alternative treatments.

### ✓Consider Further Testing:

If suggested by your healthcare provider, **arrange for any additional tests that can provide more insight** into your hormonal health.

### ✓Seeking a Second Opinion:

If you are not fully satisfied with the consultation, feel unheard, or have doubts about your provider's expertise in hormone therapy, **it's entirely appropriate to seek a second opinion**. Hormonal health is a specialized field, and not all practitioners have the same level of training or experience in it. Remember, **seeking a second opinion is about ensuring you receive the best possible care**. It's not a reflection on the competence of your first provider but an acknowledgment that hormonal health requires specialized knowledge. When seeking a second opinion, **look for a healthcare provider who specializes in hormonal health** or menopausal management. They can offer a different perspective or additional options that might be more aligned with your needs and health goals.

## **Monitor your health:**

### **✓Maintain a Symptom and Side Effect Log:**

Keeping a detailed log of any changes in your symptoms or side effects is crucial in managing your health during hormone therapy. Note the frequency, intensity, and duration of symptoms, as well as any new side effects that emerge.

This log should include not just physical changes but also emotional or psychological shifts you may notice. For instance, change in mood, energy level, sleep pattern, and cognitive function are all relevant. Regularly updating this log provides a comprehensive picture of how your body is responding to the therapy, which is invaluable information for both you and your healthcare provider.

### **✓Track Lifestyle Changes:**

Alongside symptoms and side effects, keep track of any lifestyle changes you've implemented, such as dietary adjustments, exercise routines, stress management techniques, or sleep habits. This can help identify what lifestyle factors may be influencing your symptoms or the effectiveness of the therapy.

### **✓Schedule Regular Follow-Ups:**

Regular follow-up appointments with your healthcare provider are essential. These appointments are opportunities to review your symptom log, discuss any concerns, and adjust your treatment plan if necessary.

During these visits, share your symptom log and any notes on lifestyle changes. This information helps your provider make informed decisions about your care.

## In summary:

**Lifestyle Considerations:** Lifestyle factors play a significant role in hormonal balance. Evaluate your current diet, exercise routine, and stress levels. Are there changes you can make to support your hormonal health naturally? This might include dietary adjustments, incorporating regular physical activity, and/or adopting stress-reduction techniques. As you identify potential changes, check them off to acknowledge your commitment to a holistic approach to hormonal health.

**Post-Consultation Actions:** After your consultation, take time to review the information and advice offered by your healthcare provider. Reflect on the discussion and decide on the next steps. This might involve further testing, seeking a second opinion, or beginning a therapy. Remember, this decision is a crucial part of your health journey, and it's important to feel confident and informed in your choices.

**Monitor Your Health:** Keeping a log of any changes in your symptoms or side effects after starting hormone therapy is essential. This log can help you and your healthcare provider understand how well the therapy is working and whether any adjustments are needed. Additionally, schedule regular follow-up visits with your healthcare provider to ensure that your treatment plan remains aligned with your health goals and to make any necessary adjustments.

May you be blessed with health, joy, and the courage to embrace the truth! Remember, advocating for yourself is the most important step you can take. With love and warmest regards.

Dr.  Tammy

