

Menopause

Menopause may be the worst or best moment in a woman's life. It is clear that estrogen is a very important ingredient in what makes a woman "tick". It is truly amazing that a small molecule like estrogen can set the stage for the development of the female brain, clearly the smarter, more reasonable, and generally dominating force in most every culture. Be that as it may, the lack of estrogen may also be the source or irrational behavior, general malaise, hot flashes, and generalized blahs. So... many women may find hormone replacement a lifesaver and less expensive than a marriage counselor. Unfortunately, the data is not clear about the risks and benefits of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) in spite of the Women's Health Initiative Study. The debate is often vicious among physicians and there is clearly no answer. Please ask me and I'll try to give you the most recent treatise.



Here are a few facts.

- Most women with menopausal symptoms do well with HRT.
- More breast cancers are found in women who have never taken HRT.

continued on back

The **Choice Care Life Potential** Program Preventative Care

It is within your power to make a difference in your health. Unfortunately it is too easy to ignore risks to your health and it can be very hard to make effective changes that improve your health. Dr Zwelling's Life Potential program makes preventative care information accessible, and our Life Potential Profile can help you take control of your life 3 Easy Steps at a time.

- If there is a risk for breast cancer, even in those with family history, it is probably not manifest prior to a 10-year or greater exposure to HRT.
- HRT does not protect you from heart disease.
- HRT may be necessary to maintain libido. Women may also require testosterone particularly if ovaries have been removed.
- HRT does protect women from osteoporosis and is 94% effective.
- If you have a uterus and want estrogen replacement, you must take progesterone also or be followed carefully with endometrial biopsies and/or pelvic ultrasounds because estrogen therapy alone may increase the risk of endometrial (uterine) cancer.
- Hormones are available in pill and patch form. I generally recommend the pill form.
- Hormones are available in creams and suppositories to help control vaginal dryness, which can be uncomfortable but can also be a source of urinary tract infection in menopausal women.
- There are alternatives available to protect women from osteoporosis. These include Evista, which may also protect women from breast cancer. Bisphosphonates are more exclusively involved in the protection of osteoporosis but there are new studies actually demonstrating that this category of medication may also lower cholesterol. Studies continue.
- In the end, it is YOUR CHOICE.

