

ROCK MY MEN♀PAUSE

HRT IN A NUTSHELL

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Are you suffering with menopausal symptoms? If the answer is yes, you may wish to consider taking hormone replacement therapy (HRT). What are the facts?

HOW HRT WORKS

Menopausal symptoms are caused by lack of oestrogen. By replacing the oestrogen, you feel better.

There are oestrogen receptors all over our bodies and in our brains, so replacing it can make different people feel better in different ways.

That is why HRT is the most effective treatment for these symptoms.

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

First...the MILLION-dollar question.

ISN'T HRT REALLY DANGEROUS?

No.

HRT is not dangerous. This 'zombie' theory is a throwback from the early 2000s. The science is now clear that for healthy women under 60, the benefits of HRT outweigh the risks. [We have a great myth-busting infographic about this.](#) It's been produced by the PCWHF – the experts behind Rock My Menopause.

Hopefully, this will give you the confidence to talk to your GP or nurse about HRT, perhaps you might even like to take a copy to your appointment?

OK. Good, glad we have that out of the way.

WHAT TYPE OF HRT DO I NEED?

HRT contains oestrogen. Unless you have had a hysterectomy, you will also need to take progesterone.

The progesterone itself doesn't do much to help your symptoms, it's there to provide protection against cancer of the lining of the womb.

Of course, if you have an intrauterine system or 'coil' containing progesterone that is in date, then this does a marvellous job and you won't need extra progesterone.

HOW DO I TAKE HRT?

You can take oestrogen as a pill, patch, gel or spray. Patches are transparent, stick anywhere below your waist and are changed twice a week. NO they don't come off easily. NO, they don't show, unless you are wearing the skimpiest of bikinis. Gels and sprays rub into the skin and dry invisibly in a few minutes.

Progesterone comes combined with oestrogen in patches or pills. If you wanted to 'mix and match' or make a bespoke HRT, it is possible to take oestrogen with progesterone, for example oestrogen gel and a progesterone pill.

There is also a natural progesterone capsule. Micronised progesterone is popular because it has such a good safety profile. It can also make you feel sleepy if taken at night.

'HRT is not dangerous.'

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WILL HRT MAKE ME BLEED?

It depends where you are along your menopause journey. It's a case of 'try it and see how it goes' with this bit.

If you are still having periods, skipping a few, or it's less than a year or two since your last period, then you'll probably find that using a 'cyclical' HRT helps to organise your bleeding. Simply, this means you take oestrogen every day, then for part of the month, you also take progesterone. When you come to the end of the progesterone, it gives your body a chance to have a bleed.

If your periods are well and truly over, then you can use a 'continuous combined' HRT. This is the best one to be on eventually, as it gives your womb the optimal overall protection, but if you take it too soon, you might end up with irregular bleeding.

So, you see, you can't get it too far wrong. However, if you've been on cyclical HRT for ages, then you might want to ask your doctor/nurse if they think it's a good time to swap to continuous HRT for better protection.

CAN I STILL GET PREGNANT ON HRT?

YES - if you have a womb and ovaries and it's before your 56th birthday - unless you are using contraception or have been told otherwise by your healthcare professional.

AND SO...

...That's HRT in a nutshell. Of course, you are an individual. You have specific benefits and risks to weigh up. You may be reading this and thinking, "I don't fit into this neat category." You may be over 60, you may have significant health problems that need considering, or you may have tried HRT and not got on with it. My advice is, don't rule anything out; if you think HRT might be beneficial to you, please go and speak to your primary care professional.

At the PCWHF, we are 100% behind your doctor or nurse. So, if they need any expert medical guidance, direction or information about the menopause, that's exactly what we are there for. Please direct them to the [Primary Care Women's Health Forum website](#).

PCWHF is group of over 10,000 healthcare professionals with a special interest in Women's Health care. We want to help them to help you make the best decision based on your individual needs.

'Don't rule anything out'

Finally...

Remember that getting the right HRT is like finding the right pair of shoes - if one doesn't suit try another, please don't give up too soon. Most side effects ease off within the first few weeks at most.

You might like to use the [Rock My Menopause symptoms tracker](#).

Keeping a record of what you are feeling and when it happens gives your prescriber vital clues as to what to recommend next. It's good practice to see your doctor or nurse once you have been on HRT for three months and you will definitely need a review once a year.

Soon you'll be feeling like you again and ready to #RockMyMenopause!

