



Alternatives to Hormone replacement therapy

Symptoms that may warrant treatment: hot flashes, night sweats, sleep disturbance, irritability, vaginal dryness, decreased sex drive, urinary problems. Also, prevention or treatment of osteoporosis is often required.

Non-prescription options:

- Exercise.
- Dress in layers.
- Minimize intake of hot drinks and spicy foods.
- Identify and avoid other precipitating foods, e.g. alcohol.
- Vaginal lubricants, e.g. K-Y jelly, Astroglide, Replens.
- Kegel exercises for urinary problems.

Non-prescription medications and products

- Vitamin E 400-800mg daily.
- Benedryl 50mg at night to help with sleep.
- Soy – Soy products contain high amounts of isoflavone, a plant estrogen. Plant estrogens act like a weak estrogen in the body. Soy is best if obtained from food, such as flaxseed, legumes (peas, beans, peanuts), and whole grains (oats, wheat, corn). However, when soy is processed it can lose some of its benefits. Alternatively, soy can be taken as a supplement such as
 - Healthy women Soy
 - Estroven
 (Caution: Association of plant estrogens and risks of routine hormone use (such as breast cancer) is not fully understood).
- Black Cohosh 20mg twice a day for at least 4-6 weeks can help hot flashes, poor sleep and depression. Side effects include stomach upset and low blood pressure.
- St John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) 300mg three times a day helps mild depression. Side effects include dry mouth, dizziness, constipation, sensitivity to sun, increases risk of cataracts, interference with other medications, including birth control pills.
- Wild or Mexican Yam, Donq Quai, Evening primrose oil, Valerian root, Ginseng and chasteberry have not been found to be useful.

Prescription medications

- Bio-identical hormones: Progesterone cream or pills, Testosterone cream, DHEA cream or pills – although hormonal risks negligible or significantly less than standard synthetic hormones.
- Clonidine 0.1-0.3mg daily, as tablet at bedtime or controlled release patch. Side effects include drop in blood pressure or dizziness, dry mouth, increase in blood pressure on stopping.
- SSRI medication (such as Prozac 20mg daily) for anxiety/depression and improvement of hot flashes. Side effects include decrease sex drive, headache, stomach upset.
- Effexor 37.5mg once or twice a day for depression and improvement of symptoms overall. Side effects include decrease sex drive, sleepiness, stomach upset.
- Neurontin 300mg or more three times a day. Side effects include blurred vision and dizziness.

Osteoporosis prevention and treatment

- Evista (Raloxifene) 60mg daily – protects the bones and has provides some heart protection and reduces risk of breast cancer. Side effects include leg cramping, possible hot flashes and increase risk of blood clots.
- Biphosphonates – such as Fosomax (Alendronate) or Actonel (Risedronate) – protect the bones. Side effects include stomach pain and heartburn.