



# Women's Mid-Life Health Centre of Saskatchewan

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## Frequently Asked Questions



### Question: Is Hormone Therapy safe? What are the risks?

The question of HT safety is complex and has a complex answer.

\* An informed decision about how to relieve symptoms of menopause includes understanding the risks and benefits of all the potential treatments: hormone therapies; other prescription therapies; complementary or alternative medicine (CAM) therapies; and lifestyle strategies. Another option is to do nothing at all and let the symptoms take their natural course.

The HT decision is unique to each woman; one size does not fit all. The decision you and your healthcare provider make about HT is based on:

- Cause of your symptoms
- Your Preferences
- Disease risk factors with and without HT (see reasons not to take HT below)
- Your Age
- Cost of treatment options
- How much your symptoms affect your quality of life

#### Reasons NOT to take HT:

If you are a woman who has any of these, HT is not for you:

- Known or suspected breast cancer
- Known or suspected estrogen-dependent or progesterone-dependent neoplasia (a growth that may or may not be cancer)
- Serious heart, liver or kidney disease
- Unexplained vaginal bleeding (once the cause has been found and treated, HT may be appropriate)
- Active or a history of blood clots or abnormal blood-clotting
- Active or recent stroke or heart attack

#### Side-effects of HT:

A number of side effects are associated with HT and these may depend on how the HT is taken (oral, topical patch, gel or cream), the type of hormone and the dose.

Common side-effects such as nausea, headache and breast tenderness can be felt when HT is started but will decrease over time. If they do not go away, switching to a different type of hormone, changing dose or how it is delivered (oral/topical) will often eliminate the side effect.

Weight gain is NOT a side effect of HT! Sad but true, weight gain is commonly the result of diet, physical activity and metabolism changes. Talk to your health care provider about weight gain and what you can do about this.

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Support

Inform

Inspire