

With the latest buzz surrounding hormones and hormone balance, there seems to be an awful lot of confusion out there in terms of what it all means. Let's see if we can't clear up some of this confusion with the facts.

#### CUSTOMIZED COMPOUNDED HORMONE THERAPY:

This is what we do at our Happy Hormone Cottage. We check each client's existing hormone levels with a zrt lab take-home test that uses the woman's saliva and blood spot testing (via a finger prick) to get a read on her hormone levels in the following areas:

Estradiol, progesterone, testosterone, dhea, a 4-point cortisol test to check adrenal function, and a full thyroid panel that checks free t3, free t4, tsh and tpo

(Thyroid peroxidase antibody that checks for autoimmune diseases). We use the results of this lab work to make our recommendation for each woman's hormone balance in all 3 areas: sex hormones, adrenal glands and thyroid and we fax this recommendation to that client's health care practitioner, for his or her approval. This is where the rubber meets the road! If our client (whom we've educated in this area of natural hormone balance at a free consultation) is working with an open-minded doctor AND she has what it takes to feel better (an assertive attitude that she will get her needs met) we will be given permission (hormones require a prescription) to compound for her in our state-of-the-art compounding lab, her hormone therapy in these 3 areas, that are CUSTOMIZED for her. And here's the big deal-WE dose our customized hormone creams PHYSIOLOGICALLY for each woman's body based on HER existing hormone levels. As you will see, this is what makes us different. We only provide the hormone dosing that each woman's body needs for optimal hormone balance in each area. To us, this specific dosing that is customized for EACH woman is a big deal and in my opinion, is the reason the women who come to us are feeling better. This isn't a quick fix, as in "you will feel better tomorrow," but most women notice a difference in the first 3 weeks and are hormonally balanced in about 3 months. But doesn't this make sense? It takes years for us to become hormonally depleted, so we expect it to take 3 weeks to 3 months to become rebalanced. It does take time to do it right, but once we are balanced, we are good for the long haul. We do advise annual blood spot checks (our kits are simple & inexpensive) to keep us all on the same page. And then in this area of functional medicine where what we do resides, we are able to listen to each woman's biofeedback over time to adjust her hormone therapy (topical creams) and dosing, by working with her doctor. We have had much success with our natural hormone therapy strategy and this particular delivery system.

#### PELLETS:

While we are one of the few facilities that works with topical creams as their main delivery system for bioidentical hormone replacement therapy, many hormone centers work with a delivery system known as pellets. These are small implantable fused hormones that are typically testosterone and maybe estradiol, that are inserted under the skin under local anesthesia. Usually pellets are reinserted every 3-4 months. Clinical studies were done in men to determine dosing and men were given dosing every 4-5 months. The dose for women was extrapolated from the doses for men, and herein lies the problem: women tend to need more insertions (about every 3 months) and there is an unpredictable conversion to dht (dihydrotestosterone) and/or estradiol. Some women will do fine on pellets, while others, if they

convert mostly to estradiol, will gain weight. If these women convert these pellet implants mainly to dht, they will start showing masculinizing symptoms such as: male pattern baldness, facial and body hair, acne and voice deepening, among other serious health issues. If problems become too severe, the pellets may have to be removed. Symptoms often materialize after the 3rd and 4th pellet insertion (i.e. a year). Another concern is that these pellets often lead to extremely elevated levels of testosterone that is much higher than normal female physiology.

When considering hormone balance, it is important to balance the 3 major sex hormones of estradiol, progesterone and testosterone. Typically, progesterone capsules aren't effective because they don't maintain adequate progesterone levels like progesterone cream does. Balancing should involve the use of normal physiological dosing and vigilant monitoring using valid testing such as saliva or blood spot, where the hormones reside at the tissue level of cells.

#### COMMERCIALY MADE BHRT PRODUCTS:

Popular, prescription BHRT (bioidentical hormone replacement therapy is under the umbrella of HRT- hormone replacement therapy which includes synthetic drugs like premarin, provera and prempo, as well as bhrt)products include estrogen patches (Vivelle and Climara for example), estrogen sprays, estrogen gels and prometrium.

>Estrogen patches are one size fits most estradiol in a topical delivery system that goes through the skin and into the bloodstream. There are 4 available strengths, and dosing appears somewhat physiological. They do a reasonable job of providing estrogen at physiological levels. The challenges of estrogen patches are they are once or twice a week dosing, so it can be difficult to achieve the proper dose. And if symptoms appear, the dosing can't easily be adjusted.

>Estrogen gels, creams and topical mists are the latest estrogen-only products available. The doses of these estradiol hormones were determined by blood serum testing, and they are supraphysiological, meaning higher than what your body normally produces. (This can be problematic: weight gain, brain fog and a heightened risk of breast cancer and especially when not balanced with progesterone.) Again, dosing can not easily be adjusted to meet the needs of each woman's body.

>Prometrium is progesterone in a capsule delivery system that comes in 2 doses-100 mg and 200 mg. These progesterone capsules are dissolved in peanut oil (a problem for people with a peanut allergy) and once again, we are limited in meeting the needs of the woman because there are only 2 commercially available strengths.

I hope you have found this information helpful. My goal for you in hormone replacement therapy is to educate you first so YOU can be empowered to make the best choice for your body. I will tell you honestly that being the Director of the Happy Hormone Cottage, where we are ALL about Hormones In the Balance, we believe it is critical for optimal health to always, always check hormone levels BEFORE beginning any therapy and to be able to think outside the box of conventional "wisdom" that might first suggest antidepressants and sleeping aids to treat a hormone imbalance. Our first line of defense is not an estrogen product, but it is progesterone we look to first. We never give estrogen to women who are still having their menstrual cycles, but this is contrary to conventional "wisdom." So thinking for yourself and not taking your doctor's word for it just because he is the doctor is a good place to begin. Finally, in our realm of experience, it isn't the wisest path to go with a strategy that uses supraphysiologic dosing

of any one hormone to get immediate results. This doesn't make sense to us and we have seen a plethora of women coming to us who have experienced significant health issues with this strategy. It does make sense that it will take some time to regain hormone balance for optimal health. And, by the way, hormone balance is critical as we age as an anti-aging strategy and to prevent disease.

To learn more, please call us at 513-444-6343 or email us at [info@happyhormonecottage.com](mailto:info@happyhormonecottage.com). We now have Happy Hormone Cottages in Kettering, Mason and Crestview Hills, Kentucky. Why? Because women are better, and we are affordable, have great customer service and are committed to YOUR best health naturally!