

# Menopause & PMS

This leaflet has been written by staff working in the Menopause & PMS service at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital for clinics at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital and West Middlesex Hospital.

## Take home messages

- Bioidentical hormones are derived from yams and soy
- They are identical to the body's own hormones
- Licensed HRT contains body identical (bioidentical) hormones
- The British Menopause Society does not recommend the use of compounded hormone replacement
- Compounded bioidentical hormones are unlicensed and unregulated
- There is no evidence of efficacy, quality or safety
- Natural progesterone cream should not be used with licensed HRT due to concerns over endometrial safety

## Contact information

Gynaecology Outpatients Department  
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369 Fulham Road  
London  
SW10 9NH

If you need to re-schedule your appointment please ring the appointments office on 020 3315 6666.

## Further advice and support

[www.the-bms.org](http://www.the-bms.org) (British Menopause Society)  
[www.menopausematters.co.uk](http://www.menopausematters.co.uk)  
[www.womens-health-concern.org](http://www.womens-health-concern.org)

## Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS)

If you require information, support or advice about our services, you can contact the PALS office on the Ground Floor of the hospital just behind the main reception. Alternatively, you can feedback your comments or suggestions on one of our comment cards, available at the PALS office, or on a feedback form on our website [www.chelwest.nhs.uk/pals](http://www.chelwest.nhs.uk/pals). We value your opinion and invite you to provide us with feedback.

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Speak to your clinician

# Body identical or bioidentical hormone replacement therapy (HRT)

## Information for patients



Chelsea and Westminster Hospital  
NHS Foundation Trust

## **Body identical or bioidentical hormone replacement therapy (HRT)**

### **What is a bioidentical hormone?**

Bioidentical hormones are extract from soy and yams. It is more accurate to describe these hormones as body identical rather than bioidentical as they resemble hormones produced within the body. Oestradiol, progesterone and testosterone are all available as body identical hormones.

### **What are compounded naturel hormones?**

These are bioidentical hormones produced by compounding pharmacies. Lozenges or creams are the common medium to deliver these hormones, avoiding the liver. They may include estradiol, progesterone, DHEA, testosterone and androstenedione. Prescriptions are compounded (tailored) to your unique profile.

### **Is salivary testing reliable?**

Salivary testing is frequently suggested. However, this form of testing is not sufficiently sensitive or reliable to accurately determine systemic hormone levels.

### **Are compounded hormones safe?**

These products are frequently marketed as safe. Because they are advertised as medical treatments, they are being scrutinised by the Advertising Standards Agency (ASA). With a lack of robust published randomised control trials, the safety ascertains cannot not be substantiated.

### **Are compounded hormones regulated**

These hormones are not regulated, licensed or monitored by the MHRA and there is no

requirement to provide efficacy, quality or safety data.

These concerns have been raised by the British Menopause Society and other internationally recognised bodies who continue to petition for their regulation. The ASA advises that the general public be cautious of slick marketing that can give rise to false securities, or purchase products over the internet. (BMS consensus statement March 2017)

### **Are body identical hormones regulated?**

Regulated body identical (bioidentical) hormones licensed for use in HRT. Most GPs are unaware as it is not a language that has commonly been used in medicine and it is one reason why many women resort to private compounding pharmacists

- Oestradiol is available in licensed HRT.
- Naturel progesterone is available as a licensed capsule or used off-label in a vaginal cream or pessary
- Testosterone is available as an off-label product. The licensed patch having been discontinued for commercial reasons
- DHEA is not licensed in the UK

### **Naturel Progesterone cream and HRT**

This is a widely available cream that many women may receive great benefit from. However, as already described, it is an unlicensed, unregulated product with no safety data.

The limited available data suggests it does not provide adequate endometrial protection and may increase the risk of endometrial cancer (cancer of the womb). Therefore, it cannot be recommended as part of a licensed HRT prescription for women who still have their uterus (womb).

### **Are all licensed HRT body identical?**

Not all HRT is body identical.

- Premarin and Premique contains equine estrogens. This is not widely used in the UK or Europe, but some women gain significant benefit from these products
- All combined HRT patches or oral tablets contain synthetic progestogens, not natural progesterone.
- Synthetic progestogens may be indicated in some instances.

Always discuss your menopause hormone choices with your healthcare practitioner or ask for a referral to a specialist menopause clinic.