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Patient Handout
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Hormone Therapy for Hot Flashes and Bone Health: What Current Research Shows

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Hormone therapy is the most effective treatment available for hot flashes, reducing frequency by roughly 70 to 80% in clinical trials. It's also the only medication proven to protect bone density regardless of your individual fracture risk, and it works best when started in the first few years after menopause, when bone loss is fastest. What it does not do is protect your heart — that's an important distinction current research is very clear about.

KEY FINDINGS

- ✓ Reduces hot flash frequency by 70–80% versus baseline
- ✓ The only bone-protective therapy effective regardless of fracture risk
- ✓ Not proven to prevent heart disease — not an indication for that use
- ✓ Patches carry a different, generally lower stroke and clot risk than pills
- ✓ A newer hormone option, estetrol, is emerging but still gathering long-term safety data

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

If hot flashes or bone health are your main concerns, hormone therapy has strong evidence behind it for both. If you're hoping hormone therapy will protect your heart, current research doesn't support that use — that's a separate conversation with separate strategies. The route you take also matters: patches and gels generally carry a more favorable safety profile than pills for stroke and blood clot risk, particularly if you have other risk factors.

TALK TO YOUR PROVIDER IF…

- ✓ Hot flashes or night sweats are significantly affecting your life
- ✓ You're newly postmenopausal and thinking about bone health
- ✓ You have risk factors for blood clots or stroke
- ✓ You're currently on an oral hormone formulation and want to review your options

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR

- [ ] Would a patch or gel be a better fit for me than a pill?
- [ ] How does my personal health history affect my risk profile?
- [ ] What's the right time to start, given how long it's been since my last period?
- [ ] How often should we revisit this decision?

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This handout is provided for general education and is not medical advice. It summarizes findings from published research and does not account for your individual medical history, medications or circumstances. Do not start, stop or change any treatment based on this material. Always consult your own healthcare provider about decisions regarding your care.

RESEARCH SOURCE CITATION

TITLE	Menopausal Hormone Therapy—Risks, Benefits and Emerging Options: A Narrative Review
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