



Kidney Q&A

4-12 months

Life Options Rehabilitation Program
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Q: Should I use estrogen after menopause?

A: When your ovaries stop making estrogen and your periods stop, often between ages 45 and 55, you are in menopause. You may notice hot flashes, less interest in sex, and vaginal dryness.

Hormone replacement therapy (HRT): For years women were told that HRT protected them from heart disease, ovarian cancer, and osteoporosis. But a recent study found that women on HRT who have a uterus have a *higher* risk of heart attack, stroke, breast cancer, and blood clots. Women who have had a hysterectomy and use estrogen-only HRT may also have a higher risk of cancer of the ovaries.

If you don't want to take HRT, other options may include:

- Adding soy or flax to your diet (talk to your dietitian)
- Stopping smoking to improve circulation
- Exercising more
- Using products like Astroglide®, ID Glide®, or K-Y® liquid to add lubrication

What I can do to learn if HRT is right for me:

- Tell my doctor about symptoms I have, how often I have them, and how they affect my life.
- Learn as much as I can about my body, how it will change over time, and what I can do to lessen the effects of change.
- Talk with my gynecologist about the risks and benefits of HRT.
- Talk to other women who have been through menopause about what helped them.
- Visit or read web links on MEDLINEplus *Hormone replacement therapy* at www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/hormonereplacementtherapy.html.
- Visit module 11 of Kidney School™: *Sexuality and Fertility* at www.kidneyschool.org to learn more about hormones and menopause.