

## **Bio-identical Hormone Replacement Therapy: Fact and Fiction**

### *Part 2: Assessing Risks and Benefits – Is BHRT for me?*

By Lynn Shumake P.D.

When it comes to decisions regarding health, the main question to be answered is “Do the potential benefits outweigh the potential risks?” Whether considering new pharmaceuticals, alternative treatments, or a cheesecake dessert, individuals must assess whether their choice will bring more harm than good.

The infamous “Women’s Health Initiative Study” pulled the plug on their clinical trial when they found that mismatched hormone replacement therapy increased the risk of breast cancer, heart disease, stroke and blood clots. They concluded that the risks of HRT outweighed the benefits, and the media dutifully reported their findings back to the public. Unfortunately, the reports missed one key distinction. The study was with *mismatched* hormones. None of these serious side effects have been observed in research on *bio-identical* hormones. In fact, research and clinical trials on bio-identical hormone therapy (BHRT) show they are more effective and have fewer side effects than mismatched hormones. (For an explanation of the distinction between mismatched and bio-identical hormones, please see Part 1 of this series in the February issue of *Women’s Journal*, or online at [BlueMountainRX.com](http://BlueMountainRX.com).)

Bio-identical hormone replacement, therefore, gives us a fresh beginning to the “risks and benefits” discussion. How do you know if BHRT is right for you? First consider your symptom picture. For example, Table 1 lists the risks of declining estrogen levels. When patients suffer from these conditions, deficient estrogen might be the root cause of their suffering, and supplemental estrogen may provide much needed relief.

Supplemental estrogens, however, are not the only way to address these concerns. Diet, stress management, alternative therapies and regular exercise can go a long way in improving these issues. If these efforts fail, it is important to remember that options exist. In high-risk situations such as with life threatening conditions, or when one’s quality of life or normal daily functioning is severely impaired, the benefits of BHRT can be immeasurable.

One of the greatest benefits of BHRT is that it can be compounded to meet the precise dose and mode of administration that is right for each unique individual, maximizing benefits and minimizing risks.

Next issue we’ll look closer at the art of hormone balancing and the advantages of customized compounded prescriptions. To learn more about bio-identical hormone replacement therapy, please contact us for an information packet (443) 535-8691.

## **Table 1**

Signs of declining estrogen levels:

- Hot flashes
- Sleep disturbances
- Brain fogginess, loss of memory
- Depression
- Deterioration of vaginal tissue
- Increased risk of osteoporosis
- Increased cholesterol levels,
- Increased blood pressure
- Increased plague formation

Biography:

Blue Mountain Apothecary is the only pharmacy in the state of Maryland that specializes exclusively in compounding prescriptions and natural products. We offer a holistic approach to medicine and work with a broad range of traditional and alternative practitioners. We work exclusively with bio-identical hormones and are devoted to educating patients and practitioners about appropriate hormone balancing. Owner and consulting pharmacist, Lynn Shumake, P.D. welcomes your inquires.