



Hormone Replacement Therapy and Breast Cancer Risk

By Alicka C. Pistek

A recent comprehensive research study of women undergoing hormone replacement therapy (HRT) to reduce menopause symptoms showed that HRT is tied to an increased risk of developing breast cancer and that the risk can persist for more than a decade after the course of therapy has ended.

Published in **The Lancet** (<https://www.thelancet.com>), the study reviewed data on over 100,000 women with breast cancer. It found that the risk of developing breast cancer increased with prolonged hormone replacement therapy. Use of estrogen-progestogen hormone therapies carried the highest risk, while estrogen-only hormone therapy had a slightly lower risk. There was no difference between oral administration or transdermal. Topical vaginal estrogens carried little risk, pointing to the role of systemic exposure to additional hormones.

With the onset of menopause, the ovaries stop producing hormones, estrogen levels fall significantly, and progesterone levels are close to zero. The lower hormonal levels are viewed as protective against the development of breast cancer. However, estrogen is also produced by fat stored in the body. The findings also highlighted the increased risk of breast cancer caused by excess adiposity irrespective of prior HRT use.

The symptoms of menopause are often challenging. Women may benefit by utilizing integrative medicine and complementary therapies to reduce the discomfort and avoid excess hormone exposure.

We encourage women to have an open discussion with their medical doctor and health-care team regarding the best way to manage menopause symptoms with an emphasis on safety and quality of life.

The Laurus Project works with leading scientists and institutions across the U.S. in an effort to deliver new therapies to prevent breast cancer in individuals and to reduce recurrence in survivors. Through health education and outreach programs The Laurus Project also delivers risk-reduction education.

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