

Menopausal health:

Breast cancer

Survivors of breast cancer are rarely offered menopausal hormonal therapy (MHT) for menopausal symptoms because of concerns about increased risk of recurrence. Non-hormonal options are therefore the first-line treatment for such symptoms and bone health.

Menopause and breast cancer

- Menopause may be induced by treatments for breast cancer such as chemotherapy
- Some anticancer treatments may worsen menopausal symptoms

Family history of breast cancer and inherited gene mutations

- Risk-reducing salpingo-oophorectomy (RRSO) before age 45 causes premature or early menopause, increasing the risks of osteoporosis, cardiovascular disease and cognitive decline
- **Surgical menopause** is associated with immediate onset of vasomotor symptoms and severe genitourinary syndrome of menopause
- Evidence on MHT after RRSO in *BRCA1/2* mutation carriers is generally reassuring for estrogen-only regimens, while progestogen-containing therapies require further consideration

MHT may be considered in exceptional cases with severe symptoms, but only after a careful risk–benefit assessment, considering receptor status, tumor stage and symptom severity.

Management of menopausal symptoms

- **Non-hormonal options** for menopause symptoms and skeletal conservation should be used
- Published data do not suggest an increased risk of recurrence with **low-dose vaginal estrogen therapy**
- **Topical estrogens** may be considered for with vulvovaginal atrophy women who do not respond to lubricants and moisturizers
- Breast cancer survivors should **not** generally be treated with **systemic estrogen-based MHT** or **tibolone**
- The main concern is the increased risk of cancer recurrence and new malignancies, though data are limited
- **MHT** may increase the risk of recurrence in estrogen receptor positive tumors
- **Tibolone** use in breast cancer survivors is associated with an increased risk of recurrence
- There are no data on the use of ospemifene or prasterone

The efficacy of aromatase inhibitors in the treatment of some breast cancers may be impaired by MHT.

Further information

EMAS (2025). CareOnline. Health at menopause and beyond <https://emas-online.org/guidelines-and-education/#emas-care-online> #

NICE guideline NG101. Early and locally advanced breast cancer: diagnosis and management. 14 April 2025 <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng101>