

Menopausal hormone therapy: Cardiovascular disease

Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) – coronary heart disease (CHD), stroke, heart failure – are the main causes of death in both genders worldwide. Coronary heart disease and stroke present later in women than in men.

Types of heart disease

- Coronary heart disease
- Hypertensive disorders
- Valvular heart disease
- Arrhythmias
- Heart failure
- Congenital heart disease

Types of stroke

- Ischemic
- Hemorrhagic

Sex-specific risk factors

- Pregnancy complications (both maternal and fetal)
- Hypertensive disorders of pregnancy
- Thromboembolism during pregnancy
- Polycystic ovarian syndrome
- Endometriosis

The data from research studies are of low quality and insufficient to recommend the use of MHT for the secondary prevention of cardiovascular disease.

Menopausal hormone therapy (MHT) and CVD

- MHT may decrease the risk of CVD and all-cause mortality in women under 60 years of age and within 10 years of menopause
- Early initiation of MHT after menopause has the greatest benefit
- MHT started in women under 60 years of age or up to 10 years after menopause does not have cardiovascular benefits but does not cause harm
- MHT may confer a small risk of stroke, more so with oral than with transdermal estrogen
- Compared with placebo, MHT does not show any significant effect on non-fatal myocardial infarction, CVD deaths or stroke

Risk factors for MHT use

- Known CVD
- A 10-year CVD risk $\geq 10\%$
- Blood pressure $\geq 180/110$ mmHg
- Dyslipidemia (total cholesterol >7.8 mmol/l and triglycerides >4.5 mmol/l)
- Obesity
- Type 2 diabetes mellitus
- Smoking

Further information

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