

Menopausal hormone therapy:

Systemic therapy – prescription

A range of menopausal hormone therapy (MHT) preparations with different estrogens and progestogens is available, each with specific indications.

Estrogens used in MHT

- Estradiol
- Conjugated estrogens (equine or plant-based)

Women who require higher doses of estrogen should consider increasing their progestogen dose to ensure endometrial protection.

Progestogens used in MHT

- Micronized progesterone (MP)
- Dydrogesterone
- Medroxyprogesterone acetate (MPA)
- Megestrol acetate
- Cyproterone acetate
- Nomegestrol acetate
- Norethisterone (also called norethindrone)
- Norgestrel and levonorgestrel (**LNG**)
- Desogestrel
- Drospirenone

Prescribing MHT

- **Perimenopausal women:** progestogens given sequentially with estrogen (10–14 days every 4 weeks, oral or patch depending on type of progestogen) or via a LNG intrauterine device
- **Postmenopausal women:** progestogens given continuously with estrogen (oral or patch) or via a LNG intrauterine device
- A 52 mg **intrauterine LNG device** provides endometrial protection in **combined MHT** for up to 5 years

Practical points

- **Younger women**, especially those who have had a surgical menopause, may initially need **higher doses** of estrogen to control symptoms
- **Older women** usually require **lower doses** to control symptoms
- **Switching** from **sequential** to **continuous combined** therapy depends on estimating menopausal status (e.g. age – 80% of women will be postmenopausal by the age of 54)
- **Transdermal estrogens** may be better for those with gut absorption problems, have high triglyceride levels or are at risk of venous thromboembolism
- **Follow-up:** initially after about 3 months and then annually (but may need to be more frequent in women with medical problems)

Systemic MHT is not contraceptive and nor does it restore fertility.

Further information

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

Clinical Knowledge Summaries (CKS). Menopause: Hormone replacement therapy (HRT). July 2025 <https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/menopause/prescribing-information/hormone-replacement-therapy-hrt/>