



Hormonal Contraception: *More than just birth control*

What is hormonal therapy?

Hormonal therapy is medication that is similar to the hormones made by the ovaries: estrogen and progesterone. Many patients associate hormonal therapy with contraception (birth control), but there are many other uses. This handout will explain why hormonal therapy is used and how it works.

What is hormonal therapy used for?

Hormonal therapy is used for treating:

- Irregular periods
- Heavy periods
- Painful periods
- Endometriosis
- Acne
- PCOS (polycystic ovary syndrome)
- Hirsutism (abnormal hair growth)
- Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) and Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD)
- Iron deficiency anemia due to heavy periods
- Menstrual flares of other diseases (inflammatory bowel disease, irritable bowel syndrome, seizures, autoimmune disorders)
- Menstrual headaches and migraines associated with periods
- Some bleeding disorders (e.g. Von Willebrand Disease)
- Prevention of some types of ovarian cysts
- Benign breast disease

Hormonal therapy is also associated with:

- Reduced risk of ovarian, colon and endometrial cancers

Hormonal therapy does not:

- Decrease your future fertility (chances of getting pregnant and having a baby)

How does hormonal therapy work?

Hormonal therapy contains the same kind of hormones made by your ovaries. While the levels of these hormones normally fluctuate throughout your menstrual cycle, hormonal therapy gives your body a steady dose of estrogen and progesterone. This helps reduce certain symptoms by preventing ovulation and ovarian cysts, thinning the uterine lining, decreasing the amount of menstrual bleeding and reducing period cramps and mid cycle (or ovulation) pain.

What are options for hormonal therapy?

There are two main categories of hormonal therapy: combined hormonal therapy, which have both estrogen and progesterone and progesterone-only hormonal therapy.

Combined (estrogen + progesterone)	Progesterone only
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pills• Patch• Vaginal Ring	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pills• Injection• Arm Implant• Intrauterine Device

Is hormonal therapy safe?

Hormonal therapy can be safely used by most teens who have started their period. It is very well tolerated, offers great benefits and fertility is returned to normal once it is stopped. Some medical conditions make it less safe to use certain hormones. Your healthcare provider will carefully assess your medical and family history to determine safe options for you.

Each hormonal therapy method has its pros and cons, and your healthcare provider can review which methods are best for you.