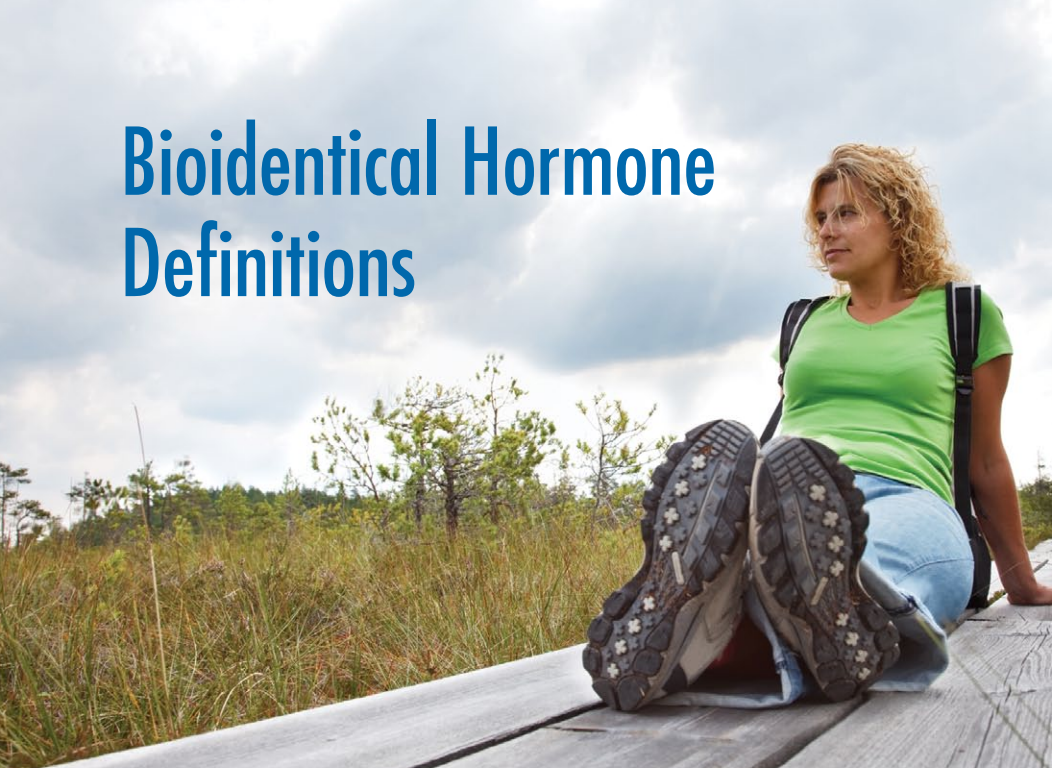


# Bioidentical Hormone Definitions



**T**here is much confusion surrounding bioidentical and compounded hormones. Here are definitions of commonly used terms.

## Menopausal hormone therapy:

Hormones (estrogen, progesterone, or both) used on a short-term basis to reduce menopausal symptoms. Previously called hormone replacement therapy (HRT). And different from hormones taken as contraception to prevent pregnancy. Menopausal hormone therapy can reduce hot flashes and vaginal dryness. It also can prevent osteoporosis. There are 3 main categories of FDA-approved menopausal hormone therapy products: products containing only estrogen, products containing only progestin, and products containing estrogen and progestin.

**Bioidentical hormones:** Medications containing hormones that are an exact copy of the hormone molecules produced in the human body (in women, mainly in the ovaries) during women's reproductive years. "Bioidentical" is not a medical term; it is a marketing term. That is why there is a lot of confusion about what it means. If you looked up "bioidentical" in a medical dictionary, the word would not be there! Many compounding pharmacies

claim they are the only source for bioidentical hormones. This is not true, and these custom-compounded products are not FDA approved. There are, however, many FDA-approved hormone therapy medications that are bioidentical. In particular, transdermal formulations are bioidentical and are sold in many standard doses.

## Transdermal hormone therapy:

FDA-approved menopausal hormone therapy products containing estradiol and progesterone that are bioidentical and are delivered through the skin (instead of in pill form). Transdermal hormone therapy products contain estrogen; some contain both estrogen and progestin. They are available as patches, lotion, a clear gel applied to the arm once a day, and a mist that is sprayed on the body. Transdermal products have been shown to have several advantages over oral products.

**Compounded hormones:** Menopausal hormone preparations compounded for a specific person as an alternative to FDA-approved hormones. Some people think that bioidentical hormones can be obtained only from compounding pharmacies. That is not true. There may be safety problems with some compounded hormones. ●

## 5 Important Facts About Bioidentical Hormones

**1** You don't need to go to a compounding pharmacy to obtain bioidentical hormone therapy.

**2** Many FDA-approved menopausal hormone therapy products are bioidentical. They are made from plant (or plant-derived) "building blocks" that have been chemically changed to be copies of the molecules developed by the ovaries. They are available with a prescription at the local pharmacy in various doses.

**3** Most FDA-approved bioidentical hormone therapy products are covered under major health plans, can be obtained from your local drugstore, and cost less than compounded hormone therapy.

**4** The source of the hormone's active ingredients in FDA-approved products and those from compounding pharmacies is the same. The exception is that some compounding pharmacies use estriol, a hormone that is not FDA approved.

**5** There are a wide range of doses and formulations available to obtain individual therapy from FDA-approved hormone therapy, so there is no need to risk using a compounded product that is not FDA approved.



## Websites for More Information on Menopausal Hormone Therapy

North American Menopause Society  
[www.menopause.org](http://www.menopause.org)

American College of Obstetricians  
and Gynecologists  
[www.acog.org](http://www.acog.org)

*The Female Patient* medical journal  
[www.femalepatient.com](http://www.femalepatient.com)

James A. Simon, MD  
[www.menopausewise.com](http://www.menopausewise.com)  
[www.JamesASimonMD.com](http://www.JamesASimonMD.com)  
[www.hormonetherapyexperts.net](http://www.hormonetherapyexperts.net)

Lauren Streicher, MD  
[www.mygyne.info](http://www.mygyne.info)  
[www.DrStreicher.com](http://www.DrStreicher.com)

Donnica L. Moore, MD  
[www.DrDonnica.com](http://www.DrDonnica.com)

## Basic Information About Menopausal Hot Flashes

### Facts about hot flashes

- Hot flashes are a natural and normal part of menopause
- Some women (approximately 30%) never have bothersome hot flashes, but most do
- They usually start during perimenopause, before your periods stop
- You may have 1 to 10 hot flashes or more each day
- Many women just live with hot flashes; others seek hormone therapy or other treatments
- You may have hot flashes for up to 5 years or longer

### Lifestyle changes can help reduce hot flashes

- Eat a healthy diet
- Limit caffeine and alcohol
- Quit smoking
- Exercise regularly
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Manage stress with meditation, exercise, and yoga
- Get support by talking about your menopausal symptoms with like-minded friends, family, and health care professionals

### Some nondrug ways to minimize hot flashes

- Keep your rooms cool, especially at night
- Wear lightweight clothes in layers that you can take off as needed
- Use a personal fan to cool off
- Wash hands in cold water during or after the flash
- Keep a glass of ice water handy to drink when you feel a flash coming on

## Sources for Information in This Magazine

Estrogen and progestogen use in postmenopausal women: 2010 position statement of the North American Menopause Society. *Menopause*. 2010;17(2):242-255.

L'Hermite M, Simoncini T, Fuller S, Genazzani AR. Could transdermal estradiol + progesterone be a safer postmenopausal HRT? *Maturitas*. 2008;60(3-4):185-201.

Simon JA. Postmenopausal estrogen therapy: which route to take? *Nat Clin Pract Endocrinol Metab*. 2009;5(3):146-147.

# FDA-Approved Bioidenticals

ORAL	TRANSDERMAL Gels, lotion, spray	TRANSDERMAL Patches	VAGINAL
Estrace, 1975	EstroGel gel, 2004	Estraderm, 1985	Estrace cream, 1984
Estradiol generic, 1997	Estrasorb lotion, 2006	Vivelle, 1994	Estring ring, 1996
Prometrium,* 1998	Divigel gel, 2007	Climara, 1995	Prochieve 4% gel,* 1997
	Elestrin gel, 2008	Vivelle Dot, 1998	Vagifem tablets, 1998
	Evamist spray, 2008		Femring ring, 2003

Note: All brands contain the hormone estradiol except those with an asterisk (\*), which contain the hormone progesterone.

