

## WHAT TO EXPECT

During your appointment, together we will review your medical history, symptoms, and questions. I will then draw your blood to determine your baseline hormone levels. If you are currently on hormones, please continue to take them as usual until after I see you. If you are on thyroid medication, do not take it on the morning of your appointment; you may take it immediately following your appointment.

Eight calendar days following your appointment I will send you an email that lists the results of your blood work. In the email I will provide you with your hormone levels and the levels at which *most* patients feel best. I prefer not to use the word “normal” when describing hormone levels as your level may be “normal” for someone your age who suffers from similar symptoms. Remember that our goal is to relieve your symptoms, not necessarily hit a target number.

I will then prescribe a combination of hormones. Most of my patients are on estradiol, estriol, testosterone, and progesterone. Some of my patients are also on DHEA and thyroid hormones. The dose of your prescription is based on your symptoms and hormone levels. I prefer to prescribe the estradiol, estriol, progesterone, and testosterone in cream form through which the hormones are better absorbed by your body than a pill: Once the hormones in the cream are absorbed by the skin, they are then absorbed directly into your blood supply. When your ovaries were producing bioidentical hormones, they were adding the hormones directly to your blood supply via the ovarian vein. DHEA is not absorbed well through the skin so I prescribe sublingual tablets that add the DHEA directly to your blood supply. Thyroid hormones must be swallowed and absorbed by the stomach.

If you have any questions following the email I send to you, please “reply” to my email.

It is important to schedule a follow up visit 6-10 weeks following your initial visit to review your symptoms and to recheck your hormone levels. This is necessary to ensure that you are absorbing the hormones adequately without getting too much of any one hormone. In the email that I will send you, I will offer you dates for your follow-up appointment. After this visit, most of my patients do not see me for one year. If you are having any problems, please email me as we can often tweak your prescription without another appointment. Please allow a couple of days for my reply to your email.

Most of my patients see an improvement in their hot flashes, night sweats, sleep, and moods within two weeks. They usually see an improvement in energy within one month. Improvements in memory and libido take much longer. These usually take six months to one year before patients see an improvement.

The most common side effects of estrogen are breast tenderness and abnormal uterine bleeding. This only occurs in a small percentage of patients. The breast tenderness does not cause damage to the breasts; it is caused by fluid retention in the breasts. This discomfort usually goes away in 6 weeks. Most of my patients who have abnormal uterine bleeding are still menstruating and we can remedy this with changes to your progesterone prescription. If a woman has not menstruated for two or more years, it is very unlikely for the hormones to cause her to menstruate.

The most common risk of any form of estrogen, particularly the birth control pill, is a blood clot in the leg. Though they are very rare, they can be very serious. If you do not have a history of a clotting disorder or a gastrointestinal ulcer, I recommend ingesting 81 mg of Aspirin daily; this will reduce the risk of a blood clot.

I also recommend that you take a multivitamin and fish oils daily, and that you ingest 500 mg of calcium twice per day. Should you have a vitamin D deficiency, it is important to take vitamin D.

Most of my patients do not experience weight changes after beginning hormone therapy. Remember that hormones are non-caloric and they do not change metabolism. Since we are working on improving your quality of life, I believe it is also time to approach diet modification and increased exercise. This will also improve moods and confidence. Remember that all alcoholic beverages are empty calories.

Your prescription:

I will call your prescription into ClearSpring Pharmacy which is one of very few pharmacies that are equipped to compound medications. Walgreens, Target, King Soopers, etc. do not compound. If you have questions about your prescription, please contact the pharmacy first as I will have given them explicit directions. The quality of compounded hormones can vary from one pharmacy to the next as not all pharmacies purchase their products from the most reputable sources. I prefer to prescribe at a pharmacy whose product I know well.

WHEN YOU ARE OUT OF REFILLS, please order a refill from your pharmacy as usual. The pharmacy will then fax my office requesting authorization should they require it.

Should you handle babies or animals, please avoid contact between the baby/animal and your body part where you applied your hormone cream. Should they make prolonged contact, his/her hormone levels could rise temporarily.

There is an abundance of information on my website, [www.coloradobioidentical.com](http://www.coloradobioidentical.com), where you can find information on the hormones that I will prescribe and other common concerns that women have.

Kenton T. Bruice, M.D.