

## Bio-identical Hormone Replacement Therapy Information Booklet & Patient Guide

Bio-identical hormone replacement therapy (BHRT) is an exciting step forward in the science of healthy ageing and the management of hormone imbalances. By addressing the causes of ageing rather than just its symptoms, we can mitigate the effects of hormonal imbalance and help to slow the body's natural decline, so retaining more of our energy and vitality.

Hormones are chemical messengers that circulate through the bloodstream and control every function of our body. We go through a lifecycle of hormonal fluctuations, from puberty to adulthood and beyond. Unfortunately, both men and women experience a drop in these life-sustaining hormones as they age.

Bio-identical hormones were first derived from diosgenin, a substance obtained from Mexican yams. These hormones are identical in molecular structure to those found in your body. They work effectively with your body and usually have minimal side effects.

Bio-identical hormone therapies are often used to help reduce symptoms caused by the fluctuations of hormones in the body, leading up to and during the menopause (in women) and andropause (in men). They may also help with premenstrual syndrome, polycystic ovaries, endometriosis, acne and other hormone related conditions.

As each person's biochemistry is unique, so your treatment should be. Melior Clinics offers tailor-made medication that precisely meets an individual's needs.

### How are bio-identical hormones different?

Conventional hormone replacement therapy (HRT) uses hormones that are not identical in molecular structure to those produced by our own bodies. The introduction of these foreign elements has been shown to cause a large number of unwanted side effects and in some cases, increases in the risk of cancer, stroke and heart disease.

Bio-identical hormones perfectly match the chemical structure of human hormones. They have been used worldwide for decades with scientific studies suggesting patients experience far fewer side effects than patients using HRT.

Supplementation with bio-identical hormones begins with a thorough investigation of your symptoms and hormone levels. Unlike conventional HRT, BHRT is founded on the principle that each patient is different and requires a unique approach. Our medical practitioners will formulate a hormone supplementation programme that is specifically designed for your needs.

Our BHRT medicines are compounded to include the specific combination of hormones and strengths that our specialist practitioner prescribes.

“After one day on bio-identical oestrogen, I felt the veil lift. After three days, the sky was bluer, my brain was no longer fuzzy, my memory was sharper. I was literally singing and had a skip in my step.”

Oprah Winfrey

## The hormones we prescribe

We prescribe the following hormones, which are usually administered as creams, lozenges, pessaries or capsules:

### Progesterone

Progesterone is often called the ‘happy hormone’ because it can greatly improve a person’s mood and their sense of well-being. It is also necessary for male and female hormonal balance. Progesterone imbalances may cause infertility, anxiety and irritability. Progesterone is the hormone companion of oestrogen; the two work to balance each other during a woman’s cycle.

Benefits of bio-identical progesterone can also include:

- Protection against osteoporosis: supporting bone density
- Improvement in premenstrual symptoms (PMS)
- Protection against breast cancer
- Maintaining the lining of the uterus
- Improvement of natural diuretic function
- Promotion of fat burning for energy
- Performance as a natural antidepressant
- Aiding thyroid hormone function
- Normalising blood clotting

### Oestrogen

Oestrogen is the name given to a group of related hormones: oestrone, oestradiol and oestriol. Oestradiol and oestriol are often prescribed together as bioest (bi-oestrogen) because they closely mimic the normal ratio of these hormones already found in the body. They are important for overall health and well-being, with additional benefits of improved muscle tone, libido and healthy skin and hair.

Benefits of bio-identical oestrogen can also include:

- Reduction in bone loss: helps to reduce the incidence of osteopenia and osteoporosis
- Reduction in menopausal symptoms
- Reduction in loss of collagen
- Slowing down early atherosclerosis
- Improvement in the condition of skin and hair
- Improvement in urogenital atrophy
- A positive effect on muscle repair

### Testosterone

Testosterone is the principle male sex hormone that promotes masculine features in men. It decreases the symptoms of the male menopause and is also a natural anabolic steroid. However, women also produce testosterone and it is very important to many aspects of their health and physiology. In both men and women, testosterone enhances libido, decreases body fat and increases muscle strength, helping to counteract lethargy and depression. It also maintains bone density and protects against osteoporosis.

Benefits of testosterone therapy can also include:

- Improved mood and energy levels
- Reduction in fat and increased muscle
- Improved concentration
- Maintaining sleep and feeling more rested
- Maintaining bone density/strength
- Increased performance

## DHEA

Dehydroepiandrosterone (known as DHEA) is an important hormone, not just because of its own effects but also because it is converted by the body into oestrogen, progesterone and testosterone. DHEA is the 'feel good' hormone shown to have a beneficial effect on mood, libido, the immune system and metabolism. It is the most prolific hormone in the body and starts to decrease from around the age of 30, matching the signs and symptoms of ageing and susceptibility to disease. DHEA increases energy and enhances the feeling of vitality.

Benefits can also include:

- Improved cognitive function
- Strengthened immune system
- Increased bone mineral density

## Pregnenolone

Pregnenolone is a precursor to DHEA and also helps maintain memory and improve cognitive function. As it doesn't occur naturally in food, the human body generally makes enough pregnenolone to meet your needs, under normal circumstances. However, pregnenolone levels decline with age and supplementation is often beneficial.

Benefits can also include:

- Reduced fatigue
- Increased energy
- Enhanced memory
- Improved immunity

## Melatonin

Melatonin induces profound relaxation of muscles and nerves, which makes for better sleep. Melatonin normalises sleep patterns and regulates the deep stage of sleep, which is very important for stimulating the immune system. It also protects against free radicals and is a strong antioxidant. Physical signs of deficiency are poor sleep, excess of muscle tension, circadian rhythm disturbances or an increase in free radical damage.

## Specialist pharmacies

Our local specialist pharmacies compound bespoke bio-identical hormone medicines in specific dosages, as prescribed by our BHRT practitioners. This provides an alternative solution to the 'one size fits all' approach of standard HRT medication. The highest quality standards are maintained within their state of the art laboratories and they are registered with, regulated by and comply with the standards of the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC).

## The consultation process

Our consultation consists of two consecutive sessions and will include a detailed patient history, a thorough investigation of symptoms, a BMI check and blood tests. If appropriate, we will also refer patients for a mammogram and/or pelvic ultrasound.

The initial 15 minute session is free of charge and provides our specialist with the opportunity to establish whether patients are viable candidates for BHRT and if it is appropriate for them to immediately proceed to the second stage of the consultation, for which there is a fee. This lasts 45 minutes and includes some diagnostic tests including bloods.

Upon receipt of the blood test results and any other diagnostic test results, our specialist practitioner will write a tailor-made prescription for BHRT hormones which will be despatched to and dispensed by a specialist pharmacy. Patients can opt to collect their BHRT medications from their local Melior clinic or arrange for postal delivery to an address of their choice. A follow-on appointment will be arranged for six weeks later to assess progress of the prescribed medicines, evaluate improvement and any effects and, if required, make changes to medication dosages. One more follow-on appointment will be arranged for 12 weeks later and then reviews will be arranged at six monthly intervals, with new blood tests being arranged once a year. Medication is provided via repeat prescriptions which are valid for 12 months.

## Frequently asked questions

### 1. Why do we need to replace hormones?

Hormones are chemical messengers that circulate in the bloodstream and affect the function of every organ in our body. There are moment to moment fluctuations in hormones, as well as minute to minute, day to day, seasonal and then major life events such as puberty, pregnancy, adulthood and the menopause/andropause. There is a drop in hormone levels as both men and women age and, as the levels decline, we lose our energy, strength and vitality. Lifestyle and stress also boost or reduce the hormone balance.

### 2. What is a bio-identical hormone?

A bio-identical hormone exactly replicates the molecular and chemical structure of naturally occurring hormones produced in the body, including the arrangement of carbon, oxygen and hydrogen atoms. They are 100% identical to the chemical structure of oestradiol, progesterone and testosterone. As a result, they fit their hormone receptor sites perfectly so their messages are translated properly and their effects are more consistent with the normal biochemistry of the body.

### 3. Where do bio-identical hormones come from?

There is a growing demand for hormones that are obtained from a plant source and are bio-identical. These hormones are converted from plant sources and manufactured in powder form, which are then available in oral or transdermal forms.

### 4. What is bio-identical hormone replacement therapy (BHRT)?

BHRT is the use of bio-identical hormones to replace and rebalance the body's hormones during the changes leading up to menopause and andropause and beyond.

### 5. What are the main differences between BHRT and HRT?

Unlike synthetic hormones that are used in conventional HRT, the body does not recognise bio-identical hormones as foreign. Conventional HRT therapies use synthetic progestins to mimic the effect of hormones, which have a different molecular and chemical structure so bind to other steroid receptors resulting in a number of negative side effects, which can include increased risk of breast cancer, stroke and heart disease.

**6. What are the risks and side effects of BHRT?**

Compliance is a key factor in successful treatments. Bio-identical hormones are not only better tolerated, they can also be individually prescribed and fine-tuned according to a patient's needs. With the possibility of adjusting dosages as required, side effects seldom occur.

**7. How do I know if I'm menopausal/andropausal?**

A simple blood test will show if there are elevated FSH (follicle stimulating hormones) and LH (luteinizing hormones) levels or reduced testosterone levels (men) for which tailor-made BHRT medications can be prescribed. As BHRT can also be used as a treatment for hormonal conditions including premenstrual syndrome, dysmenorrhea, menorrhagia, endometriosis, post-natal depression and most other hormone imbalances, it can be prescribed to a much wider patient base than conventional HRT.

**8. Do I have to be on BHRT for life?**

No – BHRT is totally individually tailored. The decision to stay on treatment or complete treatment will be made between the patient and medical practitioner. However if a patient is reaping the benefits of treatment and quality of life is noticeably improved, there is no reason to stop the treatment.

**9. How quickly will the treatment begin to work?**

Treatment is often surprisingly immediate but generally results are seen between three and six weeks. If the hormonal imbalance is severe and the patient is still on a cycle, it can take 3-4 months to experience the desired effect.

**10. Can BHRT slow the ageing process?**

Yes. Bio-identical hormones can help with multiple effects of ageing. Skin changes, especially loss of elasticity and dryness, worsening cognition and memory, organisational skills and energy and declining sexual function all occur as hormones decline. Balancing hormones can prevent some of these effects and possibly prevent certain conditions from developing, such as osteoporosis.

**11. I'm already on HRT. Can I change to BHRT?**

Yes. A new blood test will show current hormone levels and medication can be prescribed based on these results. The standard BHRT process will be undertaken consisting of an initial consultation including a detailed patient history, a thorough investigation of symptoms, a BMI test and blood tests. If required, patients will be referred for a mammogram and/or pelvic ultrasound.

**12. I'm a man – why does it say I can take BHRT?**

We all need hormones as they regulate every function in our body. The andropause (male menopause) presents a series of symptoms due to declining testosterone levels including depression, reduced muscle mass and loss of strength, increased body fat and erectile dysfunction. BHRT will help to relieve these symptoms by rebalancing hormone levels.

**13. How much will the medication cost me?**

After the initial consultation and diagnostic costs, daily doses per hormone will, in most cases, cost between £1.00-£3.00 – still less than a cup of coffee per day. Prescriptions are individually compounded and made up to a patient's exact dosage requirement and are available in cream, lozenge, patch and pessary format. BHRT prescriptions are usually dispensed within one day and can be delivered to a local Melior clinic for collection or posted direct to the patient.

Melior Clinics  
39 Harley Street, London W1G 8QH  
10 St Peter's Road, Huntingdon, Cambs PE29 7AA  
[www.meliorclinics.co.uk](http://www.meliorclinics.co.uk)      [enquiries@meliorclinics.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@meliorclinics.co.uk)  
0330-024-1300