



Women's health and HRT

Many women are left feeling anxious about [hormone replacement therapy](#) after a recent Women's Health Initiative study raised questions about the risks and benefits of this common treatment. Dr. Anthony Richmond, an OB/GYN with Physicians for Women at CoxHealth, answers some frequently asked questions about HRT.

What exactly is HRT and why is it used?

"Hormone replacement therapy is designed to relieve the symptoms of [menopause](#) such as vaginal dryness, hot flashes, mood swings and osteoporosis. HRT is either a combination of estrogen and progesterone or estrogen alone for women who have had a [hysterectomy](#)."

What are the benefits/risks of HRT?

"HRT is proven to reduce [osteoporosis](#) and bone fractures. There are also fewer incidents of colon and rectal cancer for women on this therapy. For most women HRT alleviates the sleep disturbances, hot flashes, etc. that accompany menopause. Most women report they feel much better on HRT. However, with HRT there is a small increased risk of breast cancer, blood clots and coronary heart disease."

Why the change in attitude about HRT?

"The [Woman's Health Initiative](#) released a study of HRT and the study findings included the increased risk of [breast cancer](#) and

[coronary heart disease](#) with this treatment, which is nothing new. Unfortunately those risks were sensationalized and inflated. The fact is eight more breast cancer cases in 10,000 were found. Seven more cases of coronary heart disease in 10,000 were found. There were also benefits found in the study that were downplayed. There were less hip fractures, as well as a reduction in colon and rectal cancer with HRT."

What should I do if I am currently taking hormones?

"HRT should be approached just like any other medication. Review your symptoms with your physician to see if the benefits outweigh the risks. It is important to feel comfortable with the treatment."

What are the alternatives to HRT?

"There are alternative medications to protect against osteoporosis and estrogen creams for vaginal dryness but they do nothing for the symptoms and psychological changes of menopause."

Dr. Richmond says HRT is still a reasonable option but reminds patients that not all treatments are suitable for everyone. He encourages anyone with questions or concerns to contact their physician.

Chocolate cravings are real. It won't surprise you chocolate lovers that chocolate is the most craved of all foods. Some 40 percent of women and 15 percent of men report having chocolate cravings. For women, the cravings typically come just before menstruation.

Combating child abuse

CoxHealth and [Burrell Behavioral Health](#) are license plate partners with the [Children's Trust Fund](#) to raise funds for local child abuse and neglect prevention programs.

The special CTF plates, featuring a child's hand prints, are available as stock or personalized license plates. Up to six characters may be used for the personalized message. Funds raised through the CTF plate program will be used to support prevention-focused family support programs such as [Shaken Baby Syndrome](#).

Brochures about the program are available by calling the [CoxHealth Foundation](#) at 417/269-7150, or can be picked up at Burrell Behavioral Health, CoxHealth's physician clinics, and information desks at Cox South, Cox North and Cox Walnut Lawn.

