



Bio-Identical Hormone Therapy Part II: The Risk/Benefit Analysis



Dr. Kate Thomsen and Silky

The risk/benefit analysis for a peri/menopausal woman requesting hormone therapy should include a comprehensive history (including family history) and physical exam. Routine blood tests including a cholesterol profile, liver function, blood counts, and thyroid should be done. Imaging of the breasts and bone density should also be reviewed.

Benefits: Women should have a clear idea of what they are hoping to achieve by using hormone therapy. I use a detailed symptom score at every visit so that I can measure how much progress we are making towards those goals and to what degree we may be encountering unwanted side effects. Monitoring bone density, cholesterol and symptoms lets us know if we are attaining the benefits we are hoping for while eliminating the unwanted side effects or keeping them to a minimum.

Risks – clotting: Since estrogen increases the

blood's propensity to clot, it is prudent to check for any other clotting risk factors. The most obvious of these are aging, smoking and genetic predisposition. Hormone therapy doses are lower in women "of a certain age" than they are for younger women (on birth control hormones for example). Using "lower doses of HT" may or may not alter the blood clotting risk; nevertheless we always use the lowest dose that gives the desired benefit. Smokers should quit smoking before they request hormone therapy – the combination here is very risky. I think it is wise to check bloodwork for genetic variations that indicate a woman is already at a slightly increased risk of clotting. A woman with this kind of risk faces a 50 – 100 times greater risk of heart attack or stroke when taking estrogen – conventional or bio-identical.

After I check for clotting risk, it can take from 1 – 6 months of working on the dose or delivery until we have great symptom scores, low side effects and acceptable blood hormone levels. When the bio-identical hormone therapy regimen is satisfactory, then I like to check for breast cancer risk.

Risks – breast cancer: Estrogen is a growth factor; it's message to the cells is "grow and divide, grow and divide." Too much of this message is a risk factor for cancer. Excess estrogen is

removed from the body through stepwise transformation in the liver into more water soluble forms. Some of these factors are strong growth factors – stronger than the "original" estrogen itself. Genetics and lifestyle determine how much of these strong growth factor estrogens an individual makes. We can find these different estrogens in blood and urine tests. Fortunately, if a woman makes too much of the unsafe estrogens, she can modify the process through lifestyle (nutrition, exercise and supplement) changes. A repeated test will show a reduced risk.

The risk/benefit analysis is not a 100% guarantee against risk. But when done carefully it can allow women to use hormone therapy to improve their health and diminish their symptoms while feeling assured that they are doing what they can to reduce serious risk.



Dr. Kate Thomsen has a holistic health practice in Pennington, NJ. She is board certified in Family Medicine and in Integrative/Holistic Medicine. For more information see www.drkatethomsen.com. For information about appointments or the upcoming detoxification program call the office at 609-818-9700.

Detoxification: It's Time for Spring Cleaning!

Get Rid of the Holiday Blabs....

Join Dr. Kate's Four Week Detoxification Program

- ✿ Medically Supervised
- ✿ Body Composition Monitored
- ✿ Group support to make it more FUN!!
- ✿ Expect to feel GREAT!!! (and shed a few pounds too!)

Join us this spring: as you clean your closets – clean your body!!! It's perfect timing to get rid of your accumulated winter toxins! This group program will consist of 4 sessions. Each session will include:

- ✿ Objective measurements including a private body composition analysis
- ✿ A detox program individualized to your specific metabolic needs
- ✿ Group educational sessions on detoxification - what it is, why you need it and how you accomplish it
- ✿ Group support from others' experiences
- ✿ Natural foods meals served with snacks and recipes

Program Dates

*Monday Evenings: 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
April 13, April 20, April 27, (skip 1 wk) & May 11*

*Friday Mornings: 11:30AM – 1:30PM
May 1, May 8, May 15, (skip 2 wks) & June 5*

*Spots are reserved on a first-come first-served basis.
Call to reserve your spot ASAP*

*Location: Office of Dr. Kate Thomsen
252 West Delaware Ave. Pennington, NJ 08534*

PHONE: 609-818-9700



"Spring is when you feel like whistling even with a shoe full of slush."

–DOUG LARSON