

Changing Women's Hormones

For decades, women have often been prescribed medications for moods, sleep, contraception, cholesterol and hormone-related concerns without always receiving a full explanation of potential long-term risks and adverse side-effects. While many women use these medications without serious complications, some meds have been associated with significant side-effects that may negatively affect bone health, cardiovascular health, fertility, hormone balance, or cancer risk.

Examples include sedatives prescribed as "mother's little helper," antidepressants, oral contraceptives, Depo-Provera® injections, sleeping pills, statins, and estrogen therapies such as estradiol. Understanding both the benefits and potential risks allows women to make more informed decisions about their health care.

Birth Control Pills (Oral Contraceptives)

Possible side-effects include:

Poor Moods

Weight Changes

Elevated Blood Pressure

Increased risk of blood clots

Increased risk of stroke in susceptible women

Increased risk of heart attack in smokers over age 35

Small increases in certain cancers and reductions in others, depending on cancer type and duration of use.

Depo-Provera® (Medroxyprogesterone Acetate Injection)

Possible side-effects include:

Irregular Bleeding

Weight Gain

Mood Changes

Depression

Loss of menstrual periods

Delayed return to fertility after stopping

Bone Mineral Density loss

Increased fracture risk

Rare blood clot events

*New FDA warnings regarding meningioma (brain tumor) risk after prolonged exposure have been added to labeling.

While it's not classified as a sterilization drug, fertility can take many months or years to return after discontinuation. Some women experience delayed ovulation, and reduced estrogen production.

Sleeping Pills (Sedative-Hypnotics)

Possible side-effects include:

Memory Impairment

Falls

Addictive

Confusion

Cognitive Impairment

Rebound insomnia after discontinuation

Statins

Possible side-effects include:

Studies show, some women taking statins for 10 years or more may increase their risk for cancer. Some research links statins to weight changes.

Estradiol & Estrogen Therapy

Possible side-effects include:

Breast Tenderness

Fluid Retention

Poor Moods

Elevated Blood Pressure

Increased Risk of stroke and blood clots

Gallbladder Disease

May increase risk of endometrial cancer when estrogen is used without progesterone in women with a uterus.

Increased breast cancer risk with certain long-term hormone therapy regimens.

Increased cardiovascular risk in some populations when initiated later in life or used long-term.

Women without a uterus are often prescribed estrogen-only therapy to manage menopausal symptoms. While estrogen may improve quality of life for some women, side-effects can include breast tenderness, headaches, fluid retention, and leg cramps.

Long-term use may increase the risk of blood clots, stroke, gallbladder disease, and may experience cardiovascular complications in susceptible individuals. The overall balance of benefits and risks depends on a woman's age, health, and duration of therapy. One size doesn't fit all.

Research suggests, women who use estrogen-only hormone therapy for extended periods may experience a small increase in ovarian cancer risk.

Some synthetic medications carry significant risks, particularly when used long-term, at high doses, or in susceptible individuals.

Some Medications may increase cholesterol levels such as anti-depressants, birth control pills, diuretics and some forms of beta-blockers, can also raise cholesterol levels.

Environmental Factors: External influences, including diet, lifestyle, and exposure to toxicants, can affect epigenetic changes, which in turn can lead to cholesterol imbalances.

The level of risk depends on the specific medication, dose, duration of use, individual health status, age, genetics, and interactions with other drugs. Some synthetic medications have been linked to serious adverse effects, including liver injury, kidney damage, blood clots, cardiovascular events, hormone disruption, neurological effects, and an increased risk of certain cancers. Always ask questions and check with your doctor.

For this reason, it's important for all women to understand both the benefits and potential side-effects of any medication before beginning treatment. Share what other medications you're taking to your doctor to make sure there is no conflict.

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some footnotes:

1- <https://www.drugs.com/sfx/synthetic-conjugated-estrogens-a-side-effects.html>

2- <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4427760/>

3- <https://int.livhospital.com/estrogen-without-progesterone-risks/>

4- <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25684585/>

- 5- <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0960076013000666>
- 6- <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/hormones/mht-fact-sheet?>
- 7- <https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a601041.html?>
- 8- <https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/committee-opinion/articles/2014/06/depot-medroxyprogesterone-acetate-and-bone-effects?>
- 9- <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3770184/?>
- 10- <https://www.mdpi.com/2218-1989/15/12/797>
- 11- <https://lamclinic.com/blog/epigenetics/>
- 12- <https://www.midwesterndoctor.com/p/why-are-statins-so-dangerous>