

**There are several hormones in women which go up and down during the menstrual cycle. Two of them are used in Hormone Replacement Therapy, commonly known as HRT.**

## Oestrogen

Oestrogen is a hormone that is produced by the ovaries. It is released at puberty to cause your body to change and develop. It helps control the monthly cycle, in which an egg is released, and the womb lining thickens to prepare for a possible pregnancy. After the menopause the ovaries stop producing oestrogen.

Oestrogen receptors are found in many parts of the body including the brain, bones, vagina, pelvic floor and bladder. It is lack of oestrogen which causes so many of the distressing symptoms of the menopause.

## Progesterone

Is produced in the second half of the menstrual cycle to prepare the womb for pregnancy. If the egg is not fertilised the progesterone level drops and the womb lining sheds. It is often progesterone which gives you typical 'premenstrual' symptoms of irritability, bloating and mood changes.

A progestogen is a medication which produces the same effects as progesterone in the body.

## HRT:

There are two main components of HRT-

### 1) Oestrogen

This is the hormone which is lacking after the menopause. It is the drop in oestrogen after the menopause, or the fluctuation in oestrogen levels during the perimenopause, which make you feel so many of the distressing symptoms.

We can give you back oestrogen in multiple different ways.

The most popular oestrogen treatment is Oestrogel, which is also called 'bio-identical' or 'body-identical' HRT. This is made from yams and contains a synthetic form of 17-beta-estradiol. This is identical to the 'natural' oestrogen once produced by the body.

Oestrogen can also be given in a patch or tablet form.

### 2) Progestogen

If oestrogen is given without a progestogen the womb lining will thicken and this can eventually lead to cancer of the womb. Anyone with a womb needs to take a progestogen to protect their womb lining from the oestrogen.

Again this can be given in multiple different ways; as a patch, tablet or coil. A popular form of progestogen is micronised progesterone, sold under the brand name Utrogestan. This is also made from yams, and is 'body-identical', identical to the natural progesterone which is made in the body.

Another popular method of giving a progestogen is via a Mirena coil which delivers the progestogen straight to the womb lining. This also has the advantage of providing contraception, and often stops troublesome and heavy periods.