



Brought to you by:

Sensible-Alternative Naturopathic Clinic

Suite 1, Berry Rd Medical Centre
1A Berry Rd, St Leonards NSW 2065

Call: 02 9438 3448

web: www.sensible-alternative.com.au

email: lara@sensible-alternative.com.au

Do Natural Hormones cream and troches cause cancer?

These were the headlines in the media last month, and they were very misleading. There was never any suggestion that natural progesterone causes cancer. The concern about cancer is a concern about oestradiol (a strong oestrogen that is used in some, but not all, bio-identical hormone formulas). If a troche does contain oestradiol, then there is a risk for the breasts and the uterus. Natural progesterone offsets the risk for the breasts, but the conventional medical community in Australia argues that it does not protect the uterus.

The Medical Journal of Australia put forward three cases of stage 1 endometrial cancer in women who had used oestradiol-containing troches. (1). (Stage 1 endometrial cancer is relatively mild, and is expected to have a good outcome.) No definitive proof is available that the troches had been the cause of the cancer. The women had been on the troches for 18 months, 3 years and 6 years.

Yes, it is true that oestradiol supplements require progesterone to reduce the risk of endometrial cancer. Artificial progesterone, called progestin, was introduced as part of HRT in the 1960's to do just that. It was a pharmaceutical band-aid for the epidemic of endometrial cancer that had resulted from conventional oestrogen HRT.

Natural progesterone would have been the more logical choice at that time (because protecting the endometrium is one of progesterone's normal jobs in the body). And natural progesterone would have had another benefit, had it become part of conventional HRT: **Natural progesterone also protects against BREAST CANCER.** (Progestins do the opposite: They INCREASE the risk for breast cancer.) The protective effect on the breasts is the main reason that natural health practitioners prefer natural progesterone to progestin.

Although natural progesterone could have been the logical choice for endometrial cancer prevention all along, there were two reasons why it was not initially used: 1) At the time that Progestins were introduced (1960's), natural progesterone was not available except by injection. 2) As a natural hormone, progesterone was not patentable.

Today, technology allows progesterone to be absorbed through the skin or ingested. **There is evidence that it is absorbed, and there is evidence that it does protect against endometrial cancer** (2,3). In parts of Europe, 'micronised progesterone' (natural progesterone) has become standard care in gynaecology. The fact that it remains a fringe prescription in Australia is more to do with entrenched practice than medical science.

Key points:

- **The safety of natural progesterone itself is not in question.**
- The concern is that **natural progesterone may not be strong enough to protect the uterus** from oestradiol. (In fact, medical studies show that it probably can. (2,3))
- **Oestradiol is often not necessary anyway.** Ask your practitioner for a hormone cream that does not contain it. (Oestradiol is labeled Bi-est or Tri-est).
- **Other causes of endometrial cancer:** Obesity and Diabetes, Tamoxifen (a drug for breast cancer), and years of non-ovulating menstrual cycles, usually marked by heavy periods and PMS. (Natural progesterone helps this.)
- **Be cautious with the dose of natural hormones!** Our philosophy at Sensible-Alternative clinic has always been "minimal dose" hormone prescriptions. We use non-oestradiol formulas when possible, and almost always as a cream (rather than troche).
- **Check you saliva hormone levels.** Contrary to what you may have been told by your holistic GP, blood tests **cannot** be used to monitor bio-identical HRT. Saliva is the only way to detect the fat-soluble hormones that enter the body from cream or troche.
- **Hormones should be used only when they are part of a total Naturopathic plan.** Talk to your Naturopath about nutritional supplements that assist with oestrogen detoxification and cancer prevention.
- **Natural progesterone appears to decrease the risk for breast cancer,** and this is why it is preferred by natural practitioners. (4) (The Progestin drugs in conventional HRT increase the risk for breast cancer)
- **Bio-identical hormones** are hormones that are molecularly identical to human hormones. They include progesterone, testosterone, DHEA, different types of oestrogen, and melatonin. Oestradiol in some conventional HRT formulas is bio-identical.

Lose weight faster with an exercise 'recess'

If you take a rest in the middle of your work-out, you will burn more fat. This is according to Japanese researchers who compared people who exercised for an hour to people who exercised for 2 bouts of 30 minutes broken by a 20 minute rest. (5) The rest appears to allow time for fatty acids to be released into the bloodstream, and then burned as energy.

Fructose: A problem for insulin and leptin.

Traditionally, nutritionists preferred fructose because it is lower GI, and causes a slower rise in blood sugar. Now, there is evidence that this sugar does more harm than good.

The problem is the way that fructose behaves in the body. It is not absorbed into all of our cells the way that glucose is. Instead, fructose must be dealt with by the liver. This puts stress on the liver and the result is elevated uric acid, cholesterol and blood pressure. Fructose also appears to cause inflammation, to inactivate the insulin receptor, and to interfere with the way the brain responds to leptin (the anti-hunger hormone). The result is constant hunger, and a progression towards insulin resistance and fatty liver. (6)

Where do we get fructose? In our modern diet, we eat more fructose than ever before. We get it from modern sweeteners such as high-fructose corn syrup and sucrose (table sugar). It is in prepared foods like fizzy drinks and baked goods, and even so-called healthy foods like yoghurt and muesli bars.

Whole pieces of fruit do contain fructose, but it is balanced by healthy fibre, so fruit is ok to eat in moderation. Care should be taken with dried fruit and fruit juice. Experts advise against giving young children more than 1 or 2 servings of fruit juice per day.

Digestive problems. Some people lack the enzyme to deal with fructose. For them, fructose causes digestive bloating, flatulence and diarrhoea.

GI is misleading when it comes to fructose. Rice does not cause weight gain because it is low in fructose. This is despite the fact that it is classified as high GI. (Wheat is high in fructose, which is just one of the many reasons why it causes weight gain.)

Thyroid Update:**Thyroid indicator (TSH) is higher when fasting**

If you do a blood test in the morning before you have eaten, it is more likely to reveal under-active thyroid. Researchers do not know why this is the case, but it appears that different reference ranges are needed for fasting vs. non-fasting thyroid tests. (7)

Selenium helps Hashimoto's thyroid disease

Researchers have found that a supplement of 200mcg selenium per day decreased the level of auto-immune antibodies that define thyroid disease. The antibodies decreased by 10% over 6 months and rose again when the supplement was stopped. (8)

Other ways to lower Hashimoto's antibodies

- avoid wheat products (9)
- take pancreatic enzymes
- take a course of natural antibiotic to treat Yersinia bacterial infection (Sensible News 47)

Existing patients can have a phone consult:

If you have seen Suzie or Lara for an initial consult, then you can have a follow-up consult by phone or email. Please call the clinic to book.
02 9438 3448

**References:**

- (1) Eden, John A. Three cases of endometrial cancer associated with "bioidentical" hormone replacement therapy. *The Medical Journal of Australia*. 2007; 187 (4): 244-245
- (2) Leonetti HB; Wilson KJ; Anasti JN. Topical progesterone cream has an antiproliferative effect on estrogen-stimulated endometrium. *Fertil Steril*. 2003; 79(1):221-2
- (3) Stanczyk FZ et al. Percutaneous administration of progesterone: blood levels and endometrial protection. *Menopause*. 2005 Mar;12(2):232-7
- (4) Fournier, A et al. Breast cancer risk in relation to different types of hormone replacement therapy in the E3N-EPIC cohort. *Int. J. Cancer* 2005; 114: 448-454
- (5) Goto, K et al. Enhancement of fat metabolism by repeated bouts of moderate endurance exercise. *J Appl Physiol*, 2007. 102: 2158-2164
- (6) Elliot, SS et al. Fructose, weight gain, and the insulin resistance syndrome 1,2,3. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 2002 76(5): 911-922
- (7) Scobbo RR et al. TSH variability in normal individuals: the influence of time of sample collection. *W V Med J*. 2004;100:138-142
- (8) Mazokopakis EE, et. al. Effects of 12 Months Treatment with l-Selenomethionine on Serum Anti-TPO Levels in Patients with Hashimoto's Thyroiditis. *Thyroid*. 2007 Aug;17(7):609-12
- (9) Sategna-Guidetti C et al. Prevalence of thyroid disorders in untreated adult celiac disease patients and effect of gluten withdrawal: an Italian multicenter study. *Am J Gastroenterol*. 200. :96(3):751-7.

All articles written by Lara Grinevitch BSc, ND

Obtain back issues, or subscribe to the latest issue of
Sensible News straight to your email.

Visit our website: www.sensible-alternative.com.au