



## BIO-IDENTICAL

# HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY

*Getting the balance right*

Our bodies are made up of many different hormones, each performing their own intricate physiological functions, while also working together in delicate harmony. Unfortunately, due to factors such as stress, illness, our environment, poor lifestyle choices including unbalanced diets and lack of exercise, as well as the natural aging process, the production of these hormones declines significantly post menopause.

**T**he decline in hormonal levels can lead to debilitating symptoms such as hot flushes, night sweats, memory loss, insomnia, decreased libido, thinning skin and hair loss, which further leads to loss of confidence and emotional distress.

Dr. Burt Jooste, aesthetic and functional medical practitioner at Health Renewal says: "Our daily environment exposes us to toxic chemicals, ongoing stress, poor nutritional content in foods, antibiotic and hormone contamination in meat, estrogen-like chemicals in plastics and cosmetics, which all have ongoing negative effects on our hormone balances. These inevitably lead to health problems, but fortunately we now have the tools to manage these issues with correct hormonal balancing".

There is however a big emphasis on the word 'correct' as conventional methods of hormone replacement treatments (HRT) have been used on patients for a long time, but due to the fact that these hormones are sourced from animals, which have a different molecular structure to humans, they are not effectively absorbed and metabolised into the system, and can increase the potential of breast and ovarian cancer.

Thankfully, the days of women relying only on potent and foreign molecules to treat menopause are over. There is a wide range of bio-identical hormones to choose from to maintain optimum health.

Bio-identical hormones differ from conventional HRT as the base hormones are extracted from botanical sources such as the yam and soya plants. These molecules are then manipulated and chemically rebuilt in a laboratory to produce identical copies of human hormones. These hormone powders are then compounded in the form of capsules and creams for easy application, or as pellets, which are inserted under the patient's skin and allows for continued, slow release of the hormones over a period of three to six months. Once these molecules are metabolised and broken down by the body, they are fully absorbed, recognised and function as nature intended.

Traditionally, hormonal imbalance treatments have primarily focused on women, but men also experience hormonal decline from the age of 40. In men, it leads to reduced energy, memory loss, depression, loss of libido, erectile dysfunction and loss of muscle mass, to name a few.

Hormonal balancing starts with a consultation with a functional or integrative medical doctor. A hormonal balancing plan is only designed after an in-depth medical examination which includes a detailed medical history interview aimed to highlight specific hormone deficiency symptoms as well as very specific blood tests. The plan also includes advice on lifestyle habits, correct nutritional supplementation and diet information.

Bio-identical hormone creams are often used in the initial phases, as the cream allows for easier dose adjustments, which are sometimes necessary at the beginning. Once the doctor is satisfied with the blood levels, patients may be switched over to hormone pellets, which are inserted beneath the skin, in a minor procedure performed in the doctor's rooms. These pellets provide a steady release of bio-identical hormones to the patient for a period of between three to six months.

Hormone imbalances can also affect women at a much younger age. They may have problems such as endometriosis, heavy and painful menstruation and severe PMS. In this instance, bio-identical hormones are used as a "supplementation" to assist the body to balance these levels.

Although bio-identical hormone replacement has been a popular choice in the United States and Europe since the 1990's, it is currently gaining support in South Africa from both doctors and patients alike.

Should you be interested in finding out more about bio-identical hormone replacement therapies visit [www.healthrenewal.co.za](http://www.healthrenewal.co.za), or if you'd like to make an appointment with an integrative doctor, contact Health Renewal 086 126 3972 to book your individual assessment. ●