

Good news about estrogen for menopausal symptoms

By ACSH Staff — April 6, 2011

Ten years after an initial assessment of the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) declared that long-term hormone replacement therapy (HRT) increased women's risk of breast cancer and cardiovascular disease, [follow-up data](#) [1] now suggest that estrogen-only replacement therapy (ERT) may actually reduce their cancer risk — but only for women who have had a hysterectomy.

The latest study, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, analyzed follow-up data on 7,645 women from the WHI study who had a prior hysterectomy and received either ERT or a placebo for a median of about six years. The results indicate that the treatment group did not experience more adverse events such as vein or heart problems compared to the placebo group, but they did show a decreased risk of breast cancer that persisted even after hormone therapy ended.

An [accompanying editorial](#) [2], though, came to a discordant conclusion: the benefits of ERT diminished once the hormone therapy ended while the literature still maintains that long-term use increases breast cancer risk. ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross notes, "We at ACSH are concerned and confused by the editorial, which seems to indicate that the editorialists didn't bother to read the paper upon which they commented."

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