

## **Bio-identical hormone replacement therapy information for all patients**

**PLEASE READ THIS IN EXCRUCIATING DETAIL!! I HAVE CREATED THIS FORM TO HELP YOU THROUGH YOUR EXPERIENCE.**

**PELLETS ARE NOT MIRACLE DRUGS!** Why do I have this as our number one instruction? Hormone replacement therapy in any form has many benefits, pellets so much more than most because we can improve some symptoms that are not consistently known to be impacted by lack of hormones, such as lack of energy, foggy thinking, low libido, etc. However, if your hormone levels are in a therapeutic range after pellet therapy and you have ongoing issues with lack of energy, etc, then **IT IS NOT YOUR HORMONES!** Please remember that issues such as energy level, muscle aches, fatigue, foggy thinking, lack of libido, have so many other issues that can impact these that lack of hormones may not be the problem. We definitely know that if you see improvement with hormones, that is great, but then if you have a change in sleep patterns, stress level, etc, you can see these symptoms recur despite normal hormone levels.

**MORE IS NOT BETTER-**Clients on hormones often will want an increased or more frequent dose of hormones in order to try to get these symptoms improved. It is not our strategy. Higher levels of hormone can lead to side effects. For this reason, we do check hormone levels prior to insertions in order to adjust your pellet dose to minimize side effects.

**SIDE EFFECTS!** What are the side effects?

**Testosterone side effects** include acne, facial hair growth, loss of hair from the scalp and rarely aggression. Our primary goal is to moderate even your initial dose to avoid these side effects, however, despite our best determination of your dosage needs based on your hormone levels, height, weight, etc., you can still develop the skin side effects due to a metabolite of testosterone: dihydro testosterone. What can you do about the side effect? You have two options:

Hair repair is a supplement that we get from Sottopelle that helps to block the effect of DHT on the skin to help reverse these side effects. It contains saw palmetto which blocks the effect of DHT on the skin and scalp. We carry this at our front desk and you can stop by during business hours to pick this up.

Spironolactone is a potassium sparing diuretic that we utilize to help block the effect of DHT as well. We have used it for this indication for many years for women that produce too much testosterone on their own. It is a water pill so will also help with water retention, so should be taken in the morning. It is covered by insurance as a prescription. Either of these options is fine, however, you will need to speak to a nurse to get a prescription for spironolactone to make sure you don't have any health issues or medications that would be contraindicated in its use.

Testosterone can lead to feelings of aggression, too much libido, and rarely, enlargement of the clitoris and deepening of the voice. All of these side effects are reversible by discontinuing therapy or lowering the dose at your next insertion.

**Estrogen related side effects** (different from risk factors which is explained in the WHI information sheet-blood clot/stroke/breast cancer after 5 years of use) include breast tenderness, bloating, water retention which leads to a feeling of weight gain.

For the breast tenderness, you can take a capsule of Evening Primrose Oil 2-3 times per day. An alternative option is to put liquid iodine on the breasts daily. We do carry the liquid iodine.

Water retention/bloating/weight gain-we can prescribe spironolactone as above for its diuretic effect.

**Progesterone therapy:** Progesterone therapy is indicated if you are doing any type of estrogen therapy and have a uterus to prevent the increased risk of uterine cancer from unopposed estrogen. The progesterone molecule is too large to put into pellet form, thus we use a bio-identical compounded progesterone that you will take orally at bedtime if you still have your uterus.

**Continuous vs. Cyclic Progesterone therapy:**

Continuous progesterone therapy is progesterone taken daily at bedtime and cyclic progesterone is given for 12 days either monthly or every 3 months. The difference between therapies is that continuous is to avoid any bleeding and cyclic therapy may induce a period during or after therapy.

**Why one vs the other**

- 1) Some clients prefer the least amount of hormone that they can take and they prefer cyclic therapy
- 2) Some clients don't want any bleeding, they prefer continuous

**Bleeding Complications:** These can occur any time you initiate hormone replacement therapy. It can also happen if you are missing your progesterone dose with continuous therapy or if your estrogen dose is too high. Occasionally, hormone replacement therapy can expose an issue of concern inside the uterus with ongoing bleeding as the presenting symptom. If you have ongoing bleeding that is not improving, please contact our office to speak with a nurse. Our first line recommendation is often an ultrasound to assess the uterine lining. You will be scheduled for a follow up visit after your ultrasound to discuss the findings with a provider. We do not troubleshoot these issues over the phone.

**Cost:** Pellet therapy is not covered by insurance. The cost for a full dose insertion is \$300 and the cost for a booster is \$150. If you think your insurance may cover pellet therapy, our front desk has the paperwork you can use to submit to your insurance for payment. We do not bill any insurance for payment for the sottopelle insertions.

We hope this instruction sheet will help answer any questions you may have about the pellets and the process. If you have any questions that are not addressed in this handout, please feel free to contact us. *It is very important that you identify yourself as a Sottopelle client for appointment scheduling.* You can speak to any nurse regarding your issues and she will consult with Dr. Martinez directly about your concerns. If you have a question that is addressed in this handout, you will be directed to refer to your handout for your answer by the front desk. We have trained our front desk personnel regarding some of the issues with Sottopelle as well as side effect recommendations. *Please be aware that if you are having issues or concerns with more serious side effects, our front desk has been directed to offer you an appointment to see Dr. Martinez or a provider to address your issue. We do not manage symptoms over the phone that are outside the scope of this handout.*

**Out of town clients**

We do understand that we have clients from out of town coming for Sottopelle and that it is not always convenient to come in to our office, however, due to provider patient volume, we are not able to address complicated issues over the phone. If you find that you are unhappy with this option, we completely understand if you have to find another provider for hormone replacement therapy closer to home.