

## Bio-Identical Hormone Replacement Therapy FAQs

We know that your safety is of utmost importance, and it is our mission to provide you with the best care possible and to answer all your questions. Dr. Martinez works with Sottopelle and Dr. Gino Tuteri who has over 20 years of experience in treating hormonal imbalances for men and women. And, although no treatment is deemed 100% safe, Dr. Martinez stands by Bio-Identical Hormone Replacement Therapy, a natural alternative to synthetic hormones that has been practiced successfully in Europe for centuries.

Bioidentical hormone therapy can help men and women at many stages in their life, including andropause and menopause. Learn about the symptom relief that comes as a result of Bioidentical Hormone Pellet Therapy:

Natural-based bio-identical pellet implants are individualized to the patient's needs. Therefore, the initial testing and follow-up monitoring is critical for getting the right dosage of hormones that your body needs. The procedure, explained further below, is simple with few possible side effects.

### **What are pellets?**

Natural estradiol or testosterone hormones, derived from plant extracts, are pressed or fused into very small solid cylindrical pellets by compound pharmacies. These pellets are the size of a lentil and are delivered to the hormone replacement therapy doctors in glass vials.

### **Why pellets?**

Pellets deliver consistent, healthy levels of hormones for 3-5 months in women and 4-6 months in men. They avoid the fluctuations, or ups and downs, of hormone levels seen with every other method of delivery. Estrogen delivered by subcutaneous pellets, maintains the normal ratio of estradiol to estrone. This is important for optimal health and disease prevention. Pellets do not increase the risk of blood clots like conventional or synthetic hormone replacement therapy.

In studies, when compared to conventional hormone replacement therapy, pellets have been shown to be superior for relief of menopausal symptoms, maintenance of bone density, restoration of sleep patterns, and improvement in sex drive, libido, sexual response and performance.

Testosterone delivered by a pellet implant, has been used to treat migraine and menstrual headaches. It also helps with vaginal dryness, incontinence, urinary urgency and frequency. In both men and women, testosterone has been shown to increase energy, relieve depression, increase sense of well being, relieve anxiety and improve memory and concentration.

Testosterone, delivered by pellet implant, increases lean body mass (muscle strength, bone density) and decreases fat mass. Men and women need adequate levels of testosterone for optimal mental and physical health and for the prevention of chronic illnesses like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease, which are associated with low testosterone levels.

Even patients who have failed other types of hormone therapy have a very high success rate with pellets. There is no other 'method of hormone delivery' that is as convenient for the patient as the implants. Pellets have been used in both men and women since the late 1930's. There is more data to support the use of pellets than any other method of delivery of hormones.

### **How and where are pellets inserted by bioidentical hormone doctors?**

The insertion of pellets is a simple, relatively painless procedure done under local anesthesia for better comfort. The pellets are usually inserted in the lower abdominal wall or upper buttocks through a small incision, which is then taped closed. Of course, the professional experience of the bioidentical hormone doctors does matter a great deal, not only in placing the pellets, but also in determining the correct dosage of hormones.

### **How long until a patient feels better after pellets are inserted?**

Some patients begin to feel rejuvenated within 24-48 hours while others may take a week or two to notice a difference. Diet and lifestyle, along with hormone balance are essential for optimal health.

It should be noted that stress can play a major role in hormone imbalance and illness.

### **Do pellets need to be removed?**

Because pellets are made entirely of fused hormones, the pellet will completely dissolve over the time period, in other words the hormones will be completely released within your body.

### **How long do pellets last?**

The pellets usually last between 3 and 5 months in women and 4-6 months in men. The pellets do not need to be removed. They completely dissolve on their own.

### **How are hormones monitored by doctors during therapy?**

Before the pellet therapy begins, hormone levels are drawn and subsequently evaluated by bioidentical hormone doctors. Included in this evaluation are a FSH, estradiol, and testosterone(found in the bloodstream) for women. Thyroid hormone levels may also be evaluated. Men need a PSA, sensitive estradiol, testosterone, liver profile and blood count prior to starting therapy.

Levels will be evaluated again during hormone therapy, usually 4 weeks after initial insertion.

After the first year of therapy, hormones levels may be followed less frequently.

NOTE: Men must notify their primary care physician and obtain a digital rectal exam each year. Women are advised to continue their monthly self-breast exam and obtain a mammogram and/or pap smear, as part of their normal health routine and as advised by their gynecologist or primary care physician.

### **Are there any side effects or complications from the insertion of the pellets?**

Complications from the insertion of pellets can include: minor bleeding or bruising, discoloration of the skin, infection, and the possible extrusion of the pellet. However, other than slight bruising or discoloration of the skin, these complications are very rare.

After the insertion of the implants, bioidentical HRT doctors will recommend that vigorous physical activity be avoided for 72 hours in women and up to 5 to 7 days in men. The reason is that physical activity done too early can cause extrusion, which is when a pellet works its way out. Antibiotics may be prescribed if a patient is diabetic or has had a joint replaced. However, this is a clean procedure and antibiotics should not be needed.

### **Why haven't I heard about pellets?**

For the most part, natural hormone pellets cannot be patented and marketed in the United States due to their individualized bio-identical makeup. In fact, only one “FDA approved” generalized 75 mg testosterone pellet currently exists on the US market.

Meanwhile, pellets are frequently used in Europe and Australia, where pharmaceutical companies have no constraints on producing the individualized patient pellets.

As a result, most of the research on pellets is out of Europe and Australia, but some exciting data has surfaced on the use of [hormone implants in breast cancer patients](#), which is gaining interest in United States.

Along with this breast cancer research, bio-identical hormonal replacement therapy received additional attention after being discussed as a viable option for menopausal women by both [Oprah](#) and [Suzanne Somers](#). [Oprah topic forums even expanded to include an interest in pellet therapy](#).

Hence, many US hormone replacement therapy clinic doctors are specializing in the use of pellets. [Contact us today for more information](#).

### **What if my primary care physician or my gynecologist says that there is “no data” to support the use of pellet implants?**

He or she is wrong. In fact, a big difference exists between “no data” and “not having read the data.” It is much easier for busy practitioners to dismiss the patient, than it is to question their beliefs and do the research.

Bottom line, it's about a patient making an informed choice to determine whether the therapy is right for them and subsequently feeling the positive effects of the therapy, like increased strength, coordination, and physical performance as well as better overall health.

### **So, how can doctors claim that bio-identical hormones are not safer than synthetic, chemical hormones?**

Although some doctors and pharmaceutical companies claim that bioidentical hormones are not safer than synthetic, chemical hormones, it is not true. Consider the following:

- Bio-identical progesterone (including FDA approved Prometrium®) does not increase the risk of breast cancer like the synthetic progestins.
- Progesterone, used vaginally, does not negate the beneficial effects of estrogen on the heart like the synthetic progestins.
- Estriol, an estrogen widely used in Europe is a bio-identical hormone, which has never been submitted for FDA approval in the United States, does not bind strongly to estrogen receptors and does not stimulate breast tissue.
- Vaginal estriol does not increase the risk of breast cancer, as it has safely been used in breast cancer survivors where it lowered the risk of recurrence and death, See a report by [Rebecca Glaser, M.D.](#)

It is important to understand that balanced hormones are the key to health and disease prevention. Also, while FDA-approved bio-identical hormones like Prometrium®, estradiol gels and patches, and the testosterone pellet do exist, FDA approval is only required if a pharmaceutical company wants to market a drug to the public. Again, the purpose of bio-identical pellet hormone replacement therapy is that it can be prescribed specifically to each patient's needs, as opposed to one general medication that is available on the public market. The estrogen and testosterone therapy delivered by the use of pellets is a safe and effective method of hormone therapy for both men and women. Long, continuous administration of hormones by pellets is also convenient and economical for the patient. Pellet implantation has consistently proven more effective than oral, intramuscular, and topical hormone therapy with regard to bone density, sexual function, mood and cognitive function, urinary and vaginal complaints, breast health, lipid profiles, hormone ratios and metabolites.

### **Do pellets have the same danger of breast cancer as other forms of hormone replacement therapy?**

Pellets do not carry the same risk of breast cancer as oral estrogens. Nor do they increase the risk of breast cancer like the synthetic, chemical progestins, such as those used in the [Women's Health Initiative Trial](#). This is because the pellets are able to maintain the correct estrogen ratio needed and are of the same molecular makeup as the hormones found in your body. Testosterone, delivered by pellet implantation, has been shown to decrease breast proliferation and lower the risk of breast cancer, even in patients on conventional hormone replacement therapy. Clinical studies show that bio-identical testosterone balances estrogen and is breast protective. This is not true of oral, synthetic methyl-testosterone found in Estratest®, which gets converted to a potent synthetic estrogen, which can stimulate breast tissue. In the past, testosterone implants have been used to treat patients with advanced breast cancer. In 1940, it was theorized that treating patients with testosterone implants earlier, at the time of diagnosis, would have an even greater benefit, preventing recurrence. Androgens have also been shown to enhance the effect of Tamoxifen® therapy in breast cancer patients.

### **Will hormone replacement therapy with estradiol and testosterone pellets help with hair loss?**

Hormone deficiency is a common cause of hair loss and treatment with estradiol and testosterone implants can help to re-grow hair. Hair becomes thicker and less dry with pellet therapy.

### **Do patients need progesterone when they use the pellets?**

Most times when estradiol is prescribed, progesterone is also prescribed even if the patient has had a hysterectomy. The main reason for the use progesterone is to prevent the proliferation (stimulation) of the uterine lining caused by estrogen.

### **Is there a role for testosterone implants (pellets) in a pre-menopausal female?**

Testosterone pellets may be used in pre-menopausal females (women who have not stopped menstruating). Testosterone has been shown to: relieve migraine or menstrual headaches, help with symptoms of PMS (pre menstrual syndrome), relieve anxiety and depression, and improve sex drive and libido. If a pre-menopausal female has a testosterone pellet inserted, she must use birth control. There is a theoretical risk of masculinizing a female fetus (giving male traits to a female fetus).

### **Are there side effects to the testosterone delivered by pellet implantation?**

For some women, the testosterone causes a slight increase in facial hair. For some men, testosterone used to stimulate bone marrow and increase the production of red blood cells, in order to treat anemia, can cause a spike in the red blood cells. For such a case, a unit of blood may be donated.

### **Are there side effects to estrogen delivered by pellet implantation?**

When a patient first starts on hormone replacement therapy there may be mild, temporary breast tenderness, which resolves on its own. Hormone receptors may be very sensitive and take time to adjust. There may be a temporary water weight gain, which will also resolve on its own. Women, especially those who have not had a hysterectomy, may choose a different method of delivery of estrogen, as the risk of bleeding is significant.

How can we help you with your hormonal imbalance? [Contact us today](#), to schedule a consult with one of our bioidentical hormone doctors.