



STOPPING HORMONE THERAPY (HT)

Stopping HT is a big decision. Here are some things to know and thoughts on how to do it:

- If you had hot flashes before you started HT or you starting taking hormones specifically for hot flashes, you are more likely to get them back. Smokers are also more likely to have hot flashes again.
- Hot flashes are likely to restart within a month of stopping HT. Keep a diary of your symptoms. More than half of women have no symptoms 3 years after stopping treatment and another third have only mild symptoms. Also, sleep difficulty, fatigue, moodiness, bladder issues, and joint pain may return. If symptoms do return, speak with your healthcare provider.
- In one study,^{i, ii} going “cold turkey” off estrogen does not seem to be better or worse than tapering off the medication. That hasn’t been the experience of many of my patients. I disagree for two reasons. First, I prefer tapering off the medication over a few months because it seems to work better in coming off the medication. Everyone is different but in general it involves lowering the dosage each week or two either in amount taken, frequency taken or both. There is a second reason I believe women should taper off their hormones, particularly if they are taking Prempro, and that has to do with a possible increased risk of heart attack from going cold turkey.ⁱⁱⁱ According to Dr. Phil Sarrel of Yale University, the effects of Premarin will wear off in about 2 weeks, but the effects of Provera can last for up to 12 weeks.^{iv} That will cause an imbalance of the negative effects of Provera to dominate; the main negative effect is narrowing of the coronary arteries, which *could* precipitate a heart attack.
- Got a question? Join me for my free monthly calls. Just post your question ahead of time at www.AskDrMache.com. I'll answer as many as I can. The recorded answers will be available the following week.

ⁱ S. L. Crawford, “What Should Women Expect After Stopping Hormone Therapy?” *Menopause* 4, no. 22 (2015): 367–68.

ⁱⁱ L. Lindh-Astrand, et al., “A Randomized Controlled Study of Taper-Down or Abrupt Discontinuation of Hormone Therapy in Women Treated for Vasomotor Symptoms,” *Menopause* 17, no. 1 (January-February 2010): 72-9. doi: 10.1097/gme.0b013e3181b397c7.

ⁱⁱⁱ Rajesh G. Mishra, et al., “Medroxyprogesterone Acetate and Dihydrotestosterone Induce Coronary Hyperreactivity in Intact Male Rhesus Monkeys,” *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism* 90, no. 6 (June 2005): 3706–14.

^{iv} Philip M. Sarrel, “The Differential Effects of Oestrogens and Progestins on Vascular Tone,” *Human Reproduction Update* 5, no. 3 (May-June, 1999): 205-9.