



The Hype About Bioidenticals

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Perhaps you've heard the buzz about "bioidentical" hormones; that they're safer and more effective than FDA-approved hormones.

Uh, no, says **Harvard Women's Health Watch**. The buzz is not about health, it's about hype.

Bioidentical hormones generally are described as compounds with the same chemical and molecular structure as those produced by the body. And, generally, they're available by prescription: Estrace, Vivelle and Estring, for example, are drugs often prescribed as female hormone replacement therapy.

The "bioidentical" claims Harvard calls into question include:

- *As replacement therapy, they're not drugs but molecular copies of natural hormones.* As the Harvard report says, "This is not true. Drugs are substances (other than food) that are intended to affect the structure or any function of the body. If custom-compounded hormones have effects in the body, they're drugs."

- *Bioidenticals are safer than synthetic hormones.* Harvard says, “Unknown. [They] haven’t been tested in large, long-term trials.”
- *Estrinol (a weak estrogen used in compounded hormones) offers women protection from breast cancer.* Harvard says, “There is no evidence that this is true.”
- *Saliva and blood tests are reliable indicators of hormone levels.* Harvard says, “ This is not true. Such tests can only tell a women’s hormone level at one moment in time and thus are not useful for setting hormone doses.”

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