Te Whatu Ora
Health New Zealand
Waitaha Canterbury

MENOPAUSAL HORMONE THERAPY (MHT) - gel

What does it do?

As you go through menopause, you produce less of the hormone oestrogen. MHT gel contains oestrogen, which treats symptoms of menopause and helps prevent weak bones (osteoporosis). If you still have your uterus (womb), you need to take the hormone progestogen as well to protect the lining of your uterus and reduce your chance of endometrial cancer.

For more information see the Australasian Menopause Society.

Before you start

- Women taking MHT may have a small increased chance of breast cancer, blood clots, and stroke. Tell your doctor if you, or someone in your family, has ever had any of these problems.
- For most women, there is no increased chance of heart attacks. There may be a small increased chance if you are older than 60, or it has been over 10 years since menopause. Tell your doctor if you, or someone in your family, has ever had heart problems.

How should you use it?

Apply the gel regularly as directed to clean, dry, intact skin.

For Estrogel®: You need to prime the pump the first time you use it. Press the plunger down a few times until the gel comes out and then discard this gel.

If your dose is:

1 pump: Apply 1 pump of gel onto a large area of skin on one arm.

2 pumps: Apply 1 pump of gel onto a large area of skin on each arm.

3 pumps: Apply 2 pumps of gel onto a large area of skin on one arm, and 1 pump onto your other arm. You can also use your inner thigh.

4 pumps: Apply 2 pumps of gel onto a large area of skin on each arm. You can also use your inner thigh.

Wash your hands and allow the treated area to dry for 5 minutes before getting dressed.

Avoid washing the area, applying other products, and skin contact with others, for at least 1 hour afterwards.

What if you forget a dose?

If it is nearly time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and apply your next dose at the usual time. Otherwise, apply the missed dose as soon as you remember. Do not apply two doses at the same time.

Can you take other medicines?

Tell your pharmacist or doctor about all medicines or treatments that you may be taking, including vitamins, herbal products (e.g. St John's wort) or recreational drugs.

What side effects might you notice?

Side Effects	Recommended action
Symptoms of a blood clot including: sudden shortness of breath, swelling or pain in one leg Symptoms of a stroke including: sudden weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side, face drooping, sudden changes in vision or speech, sudden loss of balance	Tell your doctor immediately
Unexpected vaginal bleeding	Tell your doctor
Headache Sore or enlarged breasts Vaginal itch/discharge Stomach upset, stomach cramps, bloating	Tell your doctor if troublesome

If you notice any other effects, discuss them with your doctor or pharmacist.

Other information:

- MHT does not protect against pregnancy. You can still get pregnant up to 1 year after your last period if you are older than 50, or up to 2 years if you are under 50. Talk to your doctor about contraception options.
- MHT is also known as hormone replacement therapy (HRT).