

Ask the Doctor April: Hot flashes: relief in sight.

One of the more frustrating issues I deal with in my practice is telling a woman it is time to stop taking her hormones. In most cases this means the return of annoying symptoms that may include hot flashes, night sweats, and irritability.

This advice is directed at women who have an intact uterus and are using combined hormone replacement therapy (HRT). Recent studies have confirmed that breast cancer risk increases after four years of use of the estrogen-progesterone combination. We now advise women to discontinue this therapy after four years of replacement.

The reason we prescribe the combined therapy is to protect the uterus. Estrogen alone stimulates the lining of the uterus, which in the short term can lead to bleeding, and in the long-term lead to an increased risk of developing uterine cancer. The progesterone protects the uterus.

Women who have had a hysterectomy and can benefit from replacement therapy are prescribed estrogen replacement (ERT). We now know that long term use of low dose estrogen therapy does not increase a woman's risk of developing breast cancer.

Until recently we had little to offer women who had completed four years of combined hormone replacement, but relief is in sight.

The good news:

A new product is now available that makes long-term estrogen replacement safe for postmenopausal women with an intact uterus. The product is called **Duavee**. It contains an estrogen combined with a blocking agent (bazedoxifen) that protects

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the uterus from estrogen stimulation. This combination of estrogen plus the blocking agent is safe for long-term use in post-menopausal women with an intact uterus.

I have mentioned this new product to many of my patients, but have yet to find a single patient who was aware of it. Even though I do not prescribe hormone therapy, I want to get the word out that Duavee is now available. Women who have been on combined hormone replacement for more than three years should discuss the option of switching to Duavee as their four year interval approaches.

I did get feedback from one physician who has had considerable success with Duavee. She now has many patients on this new drug, and for the most part it has been very effective in relieving menopausal symptoms.

She noted that there were a few down sides. There are risks of clotting and cardiac complications such as stroke. Additionally, because the amount of estrogen in the product is relatively low, younger patients might not get complete relief of symptoms. She also pointed out that Duavee is more expensive than standard hormone replacement therapy, but some patients qualify for coupons that make Duavee competitive with other replacement therapies (ref. 1).

I hope you find this information helpful. If you have questions: contact us at: www.beawarefoundation.org.

Helpful links:

1. Information on coupons: <http://www.duavee.com/savings-offers>
2. Link to a helpful blog on Duavee: <http://vintagefemail.blogspot.com/2014/09/duavee-review.html>

The End
