

## Stopping HRT - were women ill advised?

For the past six years HRT has hardly been out of the limelight, with the publication of two major studies the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) in 2002 and the Million Women Study in 2003 claiming significant health risks from the use of HRT and triggering immense interest. Further analysis of the WHI study in April 2007 showed that for the majority who use HRT to control menopausal symptoms, within 10 years of the menopause, these women are more likely to benefit than come to any harm.

Results published confirmed that in fact those women aged below 60 years and less than 10 years past menopause have a lower risk of coronary disease, a lower risk of death from any cause and no increased risk for stroke. It is only in the older age groups where increased risks are seen, ages at which it is unusual to start taking HRT. HRT is still the most effective treatment available for control of menopausal symptoms and, when used appropriately, is safe. Although for some women stopping HRT was the right decision, it is feared that many women continue to suffer unnecessarily from menopausal symptoms such as hot flushes, night sweats, poor sleep, mood swings, joint aches and vaginal dryness and discomfort.

To assess the extent of the effect of women stopping HRT over the last 7 years, a survey has been running on the popular website [www.menopausematters.co.uk](http://www.menopausematters.co.uk) in collaboration with Women's Health Concern, Daisy Network, the British Menopause Society and the International Menopause Society. We now want to encourage more women worldwide to complete this survey.

"This is a critically important survey, as it is yet unclear how many of the women who have given up their HRT have suffered unnecessarily due to a recurrence of their symptoms," said Dr Nick Panay, Consultant Gynaecologist from London. "We are keen to hear the facts from women themselves. For many women HRT can provide effective relief of distressing menopausal symptoms and significantly improve their quality of life and it is unacceptable that women could now be enduring these symptoms needlessly."

"Members of the International Menopause society are very keen to roll this survey out worldwide, in the hope that we can assess the effects of women stopping HRT, wherever they live," adds Santiago Palacios, Gynaecologist and Chairman of the Council of Affiliated Menopause Societies (CAMS).

"Here at Menopause Matters we believe that the management of the menopause should encompass a holistic approach as well as specific treatment options such as HRT. It is essential, therefore, that women have accurate information about the menopause and available treatments. We hope that the information we receive from our survey will help us continue to provide such information to women considering treatment for their menopausal symptoms," said Dr Heather Currie, Associate Specialist Gynaecologist and Obstetrician in Scotland and Managing Director of Menopause Matters.

To complete the survey, which will take only a few moments, women who have stopped HRT since 2002, whatever the outcome, should log on to [www.menopausematters.co.uk](http://www.menopausematters.co.uk) and click through to the survey from the home page or from the Questionnaires page. Responses to the survey are anonymous. It is planned that the results from the study will be shared with doctors from around the world at scientific meetings and in medical journals.

Menopausematters.co.uk is an independent, clinician-led website. Our aim is to provide easily accessible, up-to-date, accurate information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options, including HRT and alternative therapies, so that women and health professionals can make informed choices about menopause management.