

Why do we all need to care?

No transdermal estradiol

In Aotearoa estrogen patches are the only funded option and there is a worldwide shortage



Who is this leaflet for?



Prescribers



Pharmacists & assistants



People who use Estradiol



Employers



Whānau/
Family



Leaders & decision makers

HORMONES ARE NOT A LIFESTYLE CHOICE

Why is this not ok?

- Hormones prevent suicide.
- Hormones enable people to work.
- Hormone treatment decreases risks of heart attacks.
- It can be a lifesaving medication.

Hormone treatment should NOT be stopped suddenly.

THERE ARE OTHER OPTIONS AVAILABLE



ORAL ESTRADIOL

- 17B estradiol (estradiol valerate, Progynova)
- Estrofem (estradiol hemihydrate, unfunded)



ESTRADIOL GELS

- Estradiol (Sandrena, unfunded)
- Estradiol hemihydrate (Estrogel, unfunded)



CONTRACEPTIVE PILLS

- eg Oralcon (ethinylestradiol + levonorgestrel)
- Zoely (17B estradiol & nomegestrel, unfunded)

If you are unable to access your medication contact your Medical Centre



Request a new prescription and/or ask for information and support to access your necessary medication



What can you do?

KNOW YOUR OPTIONS & RIGHTS

It can be unsafe to stop hormones suddenly

| | |
|---|--|
|  <p>People who use estradiol</p> | <p>If estradiol is necessary, you have the right to it</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan when you will run out of medication• Call around local pharmacies for availability (you will need another script)• Ask your pharmacist <u>what they have available</u> & tell your practice• Know your options & be aware prices vary for unfunded meds• <i>Symptoms can change with preparation and brand</i> |
|  <p>Prescribers</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss options/approaches with patients/colleagues• Consider benefits vs risks of oral estradiol• Give people the choice of an unfunded preparation• Communication- information in keywords/templates in PMS• Make practice policies to ease workflow• Consider increasing doses if symptoms deteriorate |
|  <p>Pharmacists</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicate openly to your population your stock availability• Plan your stock and be aware of your 'high risk' clients (ie those that CANNOT take oral/gels/afford gels).• Advise patients to consider alternatives. If no availability direct clients to their medical centre, explaining what you have available. and where possible suggest and have alternatives in stock• Suggest clients contact WINZ/ACC for financial support as needed |
|  <p>Healthcare workers</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Signpost your clients & know of services/supports• Validate their concerns.• Do not tell them 'it's fine to not have your medication'.• Work to make efficient pathways in pharmacies and medical centres to enable timely access to care and medications |
|  <p>Whānau/Family Employers & Friends</p> | <p>Support your whānau and friends. This can be a stressful time for mental health, return of body symptoms e.g. pain/hot flushes, a financial burden, and anxiety for health and functioning. Look to WINZ/ACC (if applicable) for financial support. More trips to the pharmacy may be needed.</p> |

IT IS NOT EASY INCREASED COSTS

PHARMAC SAYS

Pharmac policy states only 1 strength of boxes per month are funded.

Be aware of further costs due to time taken for your doctor and pharmacist to prepare the new medication.

IT TAKES TIME

You may need to plan. Talk to your employer, friends and whānau/family so they are aware.

Transdermal gels

Available on 'Section 29'

Safe prescribing requires an appointment as these medications are not approved for use in NZ.

Costs are estimated & exclusive of doctor/pharmacy fees.

It is about YOU

Balance the stress and uncertainty of not accessing patches against cost and potential adjustment to alternatives.



| | Cost/Preparation | How to apply | More info |
|--------------------------------------|---|-----------------------|---|
| Oestrogel <i>Pump pack</i> | 1 pump is 0.75mg estradiol (low dose) \$37.50/ bottle (64 pumps) | outer arm/inner thigh | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Higher dose concentration than the patch due to less absorptionFor 3-4 pumps can apply twice daily |
| Sandrena <i>Sachets</i> | 1 sachet is 1mg (low-med) \$23/ box (28 sachets) | lower abdomen | Sandrena requires smaller area of application (may need a lower dose), or concentrate application to increase efficacy |

Oral estradiol

a discussion with a healthcare professional is often needed due to a different risk profile

YOU CAN CONSIDER ORAL ESTRADIOL IF:

- ☐ I do not have migraines with aura*
- ☐ I have never had a blood clot
- ☐ I have never had issues with my gall bladder
- ☐ I have no issues with my liver
- ☐ I am not on antiepileptic medications
- ☐ I have no history of a heart attack or stroke or high blood pressure
- ☐ I am not within 6 weeks of surgery/not due an operation

*oral estrogen can be used in migraine without aura, but transdermal is preferable

this is based on 17B-estradiol (not other synthetic estrogens)

Progynova (funded)
Estrofem (unfunded)

BENEFITS OF ORAL ESTRADIOL

- Availability, consistency, funded, convenience
- Symptom control (you may feel better!)
- Continued health benefits of estrogen
- No sticky patch remnants!

RISKS OF ORAL ESTRADIOL

- Risk of blood clot 1:1000
- Risk of gall stones
- Contraindications eg cardiovascular disease
- Side effects (headaches, nausea, decreased libido)

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

PATCHES

stable release and are better for individuals with migraine

SYMPTOM CONTROL

- may be able to have a smaller dose with a gel
- may improve! (or worsen)
- may need to adjust

WILL THIS END?

It could be a while...



Making the change - doses

For some the conversion is not like for like. Doses may need to change based on preparation.

Estradiol Patches

Estradiol is absorbed through the adhesive (glue) in the patch. Absorption and symptom control can be different depending on the brand.

Practical tips:

- Cut patches to make up required dose.
- Keep remaining patch in the packet in sealed container.
- If symptoms worsen increase dose.
- Can combine patch + gel.
- Obtain different strength patches to minimise costs.



Estradiol-approximate equivalent doses

| | | Low | Medium | High |
|--------------|-----------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Oral | 17B estradiol | 0.5mg | 1mg | 2mg |
| Patch | 17B estradiol | 25mcg | 50mcg | 75-100mcg |
| Gel (pump) | estradiol hemihydrate | 1 pump 0.75mg | 2 pumps 1.5mg | 3-4 pumps 2.25-3mg |
| Gel (sachet) | estradiol | 1/2 sachet 0.5mg | 1 sachet 1mg | 2-3 sachet 2-3mg |

WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO?

- + share your story
- + support your village
- + give your doctor time to do the script
- + know your options
- + ask for help - financially & with respect to wellbeing

know that
you are not
crazy and
not alone

What is necessary?

- ➡ More options of medications, not just limited to transdermal estrogen
- ➡ Removal of cost barriers
- ➡ Support for users of hormones
- ➡ Funding for womens health
- ➡ Worldwide understanding of the role of hormones

GET SUPPORT

- Your Medical Centre
- Your Local Pharmacy/in your community
- Your PHO/Local health authority

If you have been denied medication you may wish to contact organisations like the Health and Disability Commission or the Human Rights Commission

