



## Combat hot flashes – just spit!

By Donella Young, MD, North Basin Medical Clinics



Management of menopausal symptoms with conventional hormone replacement therapy has become a real medical mess. Many clinical trials and studies have been done — the latest showing that synthetic hormones may do more harm than good. So what's a gal with hot flashes, cold feet and mood swings to do?

Spit! That's right, women with pre and menopausal symptoms can now look to saliva testing and Bio-identical Hormone Replacement Therapy (BHRT) for answers.

I know it sounds odd, but there is good research out there to show that there are alternative ways to test hormonal balance and we can offer safer and more effective hormone replacements through Bio-identical HRT.

What is Bio-identical HRT?

For years, medical science prescribed synthetic forms of the hormone estrogen and progesterin because it was all that was available. We are now finding out we can make these to be biologically identical to the estrogen and progesterone that an individual person has in their body. These bio-identical supplements are working safely, with few, if any, side effects and women are getting relief.

Let's start with diagnosis.

In the past, blood draws were used to show hormonal levels. Although we can still do that, we also have available a test that uses saliva. It's much less expensive and invasive than blood to collect (no needles!), and because the saliva has passed through an organ, it carries very accurate hormonal indicators.

Yes, this is controversial, but many of us here at Lincoln Hospital have read the studies and feel confident that this is a legitimate way to monitor hormone levels. It's also covered by many insurance companies.

One of those who've read mountains of studies over the years on this subject is our Pharmacist Merilla Hopkins. While on staff at Davenport Pharmacy, Merilla saw scores of women desperate for relief from menopausal symptoms who were willing to try almost anything. It got her interested and she started to research. She's now hopelessly hooked on the topic and has an amazing grasp on the intricacies of individualized hormone replacement therapy. Merilla has spear-headed our BHRT program and continues to be our technical consultant.

Saliva testing and BHRT are now part of the Women's Health Program here at Lincoln Hospital. For those with insurance, check with your company before getting a test to make sure it's covered. Many plans treat it just like a traditional blood test. For ladies with no insurance, it's less expensive to purchase the saliva test kit at the local pharmacy. Once you have your results, bring them to a member of our women's health team which includes me, Dr. Deanna Huntwork, Susan Eastman, ARNP and Stacia Soliday, ARNP, and we will get on the case.

And remember, this is not only for peri-menopausal women. Men and women of any age who have sudden emotional changes, sleep and hair loss, irritability, hot flashes, pain, headaches, skin changes or just feel their hormones may be out of balance can benefit from this.

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