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Can hormone replacement therapy really improve your skin?



Women approaching menopause are frequently reminded, either by others or by their own bodies, of the changes that come along with this dramatic shift in hormones. Mood swings, hot flashes, night sweats, insomnia, and weight gain are the most common. Perhaps the most visible is what menopause does to your skin.

Of course, skin aging is influenced by a variety of factors, both genetic and environmental in addition to hormones. Lower levels of estrogen are primarily to blame, since it's the hormone that produces hyaluronic acid which keeps your skin and tissues plump and moist. More than that, estrogen also impacts muscle mass and metabolism, which can also affect the way your skin looks and feels.

If you've begun to notice subtle changes in your skin, especially if you've been looking at yourself on a computer screen for endless Zoom calls lately, [you may want to consider what hormone replacement therapy \(HRT\)](#) can do to help improve your skin from inside by addressing the root cause.

HRT increases skin hydration and reduce skin atrophy

The protective role of estrogens, along with their numerous benefits for the skin, is well known. Estrogen levels are at their peak about the time you reach your early 20s, decrease by 50 percent at age 50 and finally drop dramatically after menopause. These decreases can cause visible changes in your skin at all three levels:

- In the **epidermis**, the shape and structure of keratinocytes (the skin cells that produce keratin) start to change and the spaces between these cells increase the size and number of visible pores.
- The **dermis** begins to thin as a result of the loss of collagen, elastin and hyaluronic acid. Your skin begins to lose tone and becomes more likely to expand, which increases the appearance of lines and wrinkles.
- In both the dermis and **hypodermis**, the sweat gland structures become distorted and blood flow begins to decrease. As the thickness of the dermis decreases, the distribution of subcutaneous fat in the hypodermis increases which can mean sallow skin.

[While lack of estrogen can contribute to the deterioration of your overall skin health, HRT can restore skin health.](#) Several studies show a clear relationship between circulating estrogen levels and a woman's appearance, skin health, and facial coloration.

Other changes below the surface

Changes caused by menopause go beyond aesthetics. Menopause can also reduce your skin's ability to protect your body from water loss and the way you perceive pain. These changes can further impede your body's ability to regulate temperature and heal wounds, alter your body's immune response and even disrupt the production of vitamin D.

The collagen content of your skin is primarily responsible for its elasticity and strength. While postmenopausal women experience a significant decrease in collagen content compared to premenopausal women, estrogens have been shown to increase collagen, elastin, vascularization, and skin thickness. They can also block the breakdown of collagen fibers, improve healing, and stimulate the production of keratinocytes. Estrogens even stimulate hair follicles in the scalp and act as antioxidants to protect you against stress and inflammation.

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Testosterone also has an important beneficial effect: it increases the production of collagen, increasing the thickness of the skin and improving its texture, while decreasing fat deposit and the appearance of cellulite.

Starting early makes a difference

Thirty percent of collagen loss during the first five years of menopause can be prevented and even reversed with estrogen replacement.

[Several studies have shown an increase in skin collagen in menopausal women undergoing hormone replacement therapy.](#) The most striking fact is that changes in collagen levels were observed in the first six months of treatment.

[Of course, HRT isn't just about skin care. It also offers a number of substantial additional benefits to women who are managing the symptoms of menopause,](#) including:

- You'll sleep better. Hormone replacement therapy can reduce or eliminate insomnia and night sweats. That extra sleep can also help improve the appearance of your skin.
- You may lower your risk of dementia
- It may decrease the risk of heart disease.

If you're like most women, the stress of juggling a household under lockdown, a job that has you working from home, and home-schooling kids can leave you struggling to maintain a healthy balance of emotional and physical well-being. By taking care of yourself – both inside and outside – you'll feel better and be better able to manage all the balls you have up in the air. [HRT may be one way you can accomplish balance while feeling your best.](#)

[Contact REPLENISH Wellness Center](#) to schedule an evaluation and learn how restoring hormones to their optimal level may address your own specific health concerns.