

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Issues New Recommendation:

Task Force Recommends Against Use of Hormonal Therapy to Prevent Chronic Conditions in Postmenopausal Women

WASHINGTON, D.C. – October 23, 2012 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today released a final statement recommending against the use of hormone therapy in women who have experienced menopause to prevent chronic conditions.

“Hormone therapy” includes the use of estrogen and progestin in postmenopausal women and estrogen alone in postmenopausal women who have had a hysterectomy.

It is important to note that the Task Force is not making a recommendation about whether to use hormone therapy for the management of menopausal symptoms, such as hot flashes.

“In the past, it was thought that taking hormones after menopause ended might reduce a woman’s risk of developing certain chronic diseases, such as heart disease or dementia,” said Task Force member Kirstin Bibbins-Domingo, Ph.D., M.D. “However, its use in this way does not help prevent these conditions and may even increase a woman’s chance of developing them. Importantly, the use of these medications can cause serious harm to a woman’s health—such as stroke, blood clots, or gallbladder disease.”

Many major health organizations recommend against hormone therapy in postmenopausal women to prevent chronic conditions because of increased risk of serious health outcomes. These groups include the American Heart Association, the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and the American Academy of Family Physicians. The Task Force issued a similar recommendation in 2005. To make this updated recommendation, the Task Force commissioned a comprehensive review of the science published since that time.

“Everyone is interested in preventing chronic diseases. The Task Force recommends a number of important preventive measures women can take to avoid chronic diseases, including quitting smoking and identifying and treating high blood pressure and high cholesterol,” stated Dr. Bibbins-Domingo. There are also other effective ways that women can reduce their risk of bone fractures, such as weight-bearing exercise and being screened and treated, as appropriate, for osteoporosis. “Women should talk with their health professionals about ways for them to stay healthy and improve their overall health.”

The Task Force’s recommendations have been published online in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, as well as on the Task Force Web site at <http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org>. A fact sheet that explains the recommendation statement in plain language is also available.

The Task Force is an independent group of national experts in prevention and evidence-based medicine who works to improve the health of all Americans by making evidence-based recommendations about clinical preventive services such as screenings, counseling services, and preventive medications.

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