

Raging hormones

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Hormone therapy keeps the skin looking younger and healthier while maintaining the cosmetic benefits such as smoothing out wrinkles.

By **Rachel Naud**, for the Calgary Herald

As we age, our bodies' hormonal levels decrease, which affects our organs, including our skin. As a result, our skin shows signs of this hormonal deterioration in the form of sagging and wrinkles.

However, many Calgarians are fighting the effects of Father Time with the assistance of hormone therapy.

"Hormone therapy is supplementing people with the hormones naturally produced by the body," says Dr. Elizabeth Lourens, medical director of the Age Management Institute in Calgary. "Adding back these hormones can help offset some of the changes associated with aging."

Hormone therapy keeps the skin looking younger and healthier while maintaining the cosmetic benefits such as smoothing out wrinkles. For example, estrogen can help with skin elasticity collagen production.

"It's becoming more popular," says Lourens. "People are living longer and demanding treatments that can improve quality of life and appearance as they age. Hormones identical to those produced by our bodies are also more readily available and may have significantly fewer side-effects than the popular

hormone-like drugs.”

Despite its popularity, Lourens says hormone therapy should not be used solely for cosmetic purposes.

“The expected benefits must outweigh the risks; the patient must be assessed and the hormones administered by a physician with special training in hormone-replacement therapy,” she says.

Patients who undergo hormone therapy can expect to see results in about two to four months after treatment. However, Lourens says they must be prepared to be in for the long haul.

“Hormone therapy is unlike other cosmetic treatments in that it needs to be started early and continued to be of benefit,” says Lourens.

“It is also embedded in a more comprehensive program of dietary modification and nutrient supplementation. So it is an ongoing process, rather than an event.”

Because we are each genetically very different and so are our hormone requirements, not everyone is a candidate for hormone therapy.

Risks associated with hormone therapy include possible increased rates of breast and endometrial cancer, problems with blood clotting and weight gain. The cost of the procedure varies per individual.

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