

HEALTH & SCIENCE

Experts consider HT for younger women

Women's Health Initiative results showed that hormone therapy is not a fountain of youth, but some think those closer to menopause could gain.

By [Victoria Stagg Elliott](#), *AMNews* staff. Feb. 28, 2005.

After the release of the July 2002 Women's Health Initiative findings, many women chose to abandon their hormone pills, and many physicians decided to offer other options.

Still, questions not answered by the large randomized controlled trial persist. Most notably, what might the effect of hormone therapy be on the overall health of women who were younger than most of those who participated in the trial?

"The best studies we have on the effect of hormone therapy on cardiovascular disease are from the WHI studies," said Marilyn Schapira, MD, MPH, associate professor of internal medicine at the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee. "But it was not as revealing with regards to the effects on younger women."

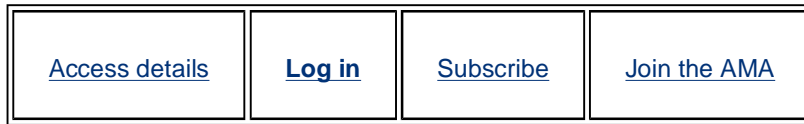
Specifically, WHI participants had an average age of 63 and were several years past menopause. This variable leads some experts to theorize that women in their late 40s and early 50s could reap the cardiovascular benefits that the older women didn't by taking the hormones closer to menopause, before heart disease takes hold.

"When you look at the rest of the body of science, there is a biological plausibility for the theory that started early or right at the time of menopause, there may be some preventive role," said Wulf Utian, MD, PhD, executive director of the North American Menopause Society.

Researchers have been picking apart the WHI data and that of other studies in a search of clues to determine if changes in dosage or initiation age could salvage the previous promise that hormone therapy could do more than just alleviate menopause symptoms, at least for some women. It's also been the subject of numerous academic papers.

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