

## What to Know about Bioidentical Hormone Therapy

***Bioidentical hormone therapy*** is a widely used term that often causes confusion.

“Bioidentical” is a marketing term, not a medical one. It refers to hormones with the same molecular structure as the hormones our bodies produce. Sometimes these hormones are also called “body identical”. It is important to know that all hormone products are made in a lab, except conjugated equine estrogen, which comes from the urine of pregnant horses.

Most people do not need to pay out of pocket for compounded products to get bioidentical hormones in Canada. The claim that only compounded versions are truly bioidentical is not true. Many bioidentical hormone medications are approved by Health Canada and covered by most private health benefit plans.

The Menopause Society (endorsed by the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada and the Canadian Menopause Society) notes:

“Compounded bioidentical hormone therapy presents safety concerns, including minimal government regulation and monitoring, overdosing and underdosing, presence of impurities and lack of sterility, lack of scientific efficacy and safety data, and lack of a label outlining risks.”

It also states that custom-compounded hormones should only be considered when someone has an allergy or sensitivity to an approved product or needs a dosage unavailable commercially.

Read the full 2022 Menopause Society guidelines here: [The Menopause Society Position Statement](#).



While medical guidelines prioritize hormone therapies approved by Health Canada because of their proven safety and consistency, personal choice is important. Some women prefer custom-compounded treatments because they value the personalized approach and care they receive from certain providers. Others may need a dose or ingredient that is not available in pharmaceutical-grade medications. For testosterone, access can be even more limited—most doctors are unfamiliar with prescribing it for women, so it is often only available through a specialist or private clinics, which may offer compounded testosterone. Health Canada-approved testosterone for men can also be prescribed off label for women at much lower doses.

Many women wonder about the difference between Health Canada approved hormone therapy and compounded bioidentical hormones. Here's a quick comparison to help clarify:

Health Canada–Approved Hormone Therapy	Custom-Compounded Hormone Therapy
Regulated and tested for safety, purity, composition, efficacy and consistency	Not subject to the same regulatory oversight
Covered by many drug plans	Typically paid out of pocket
Standardized doses	Custom-made in compounding pharmacies
Evaluated in clinical trials	Limited safety and efficacy data

*While compounding pharmacies in Canada are regulated by provincial or territorial pharmacy authorities or colleges, the custom-made hormone therapies they produce are not approved by Health Canada.*

The Menopause Foundation of Canada believes that women deserve accurate, evidence-based information to understand the differences between treatment options. This enables them to confidently make decisions that reflect their personal values, health needs and life circumstances.