

Study: Drug may relieve menopausal symptoms

July 23 2015, by Diane Smith, Fort Worth Star-Telegram

Women who suffer from hot flashes, night sweats, memory loss and other miseries of menopause might find safe relief for their symptoms in a new medication under study at the University of North Texas Health Science Center.

The compound would reduce any possible cancer risk because it is converted to [estrogen](#) in the brain only. Common hormone replacement therapy floods the whole body with estrogen, which is considered a potential health risk.

The study by professor Laszlo Prokai, the center's Robert A. Welch Chair in Biochemistry, appears in the July issue of the academic journal *Science Translational Medicine*.

Large-scale clinical trials using equine estrogen in 2002 showed a possible link between hormone replacement therapy and cancer, leading many women to stop taking the drugs and simply suffer with the symptoms.

"Since DHED delivers estrogen only in the brain, it spares other organs from hormone exposure, along with its side effects," Prokai said. "The rest of the body does not recognize DHED, but the brain does and metabolizes it to estrogen." DHED is the acronym of the chemical compound being studied, Prokai said.

Women who do use [estrogen therapy](#), which remains the most effective

way to relieve [menopausal symptoms](#), are generally told to take as little as possible for as briefly as possible. But symptoms can last 10 or more years for some women, according to a release from the health science center.

Experts at the center said that while DHED has yet to undergo human clinical trials and win approval from regulators, it could be a solution for millions of women.

A woman is considered to be in [menopause](#) 12 months after her last menstrual cycle, usually in her 40s or 50s in the U.S., according to the Mayo Clinic.

Prokai said in an interview that DHED would keep women from having to live with the "constant onslaught of hot flashes, sleep deprivation, depression, memory loss and learning ability declining."

He said further studies aim to confirm whether the drug delivers on its promise. Fourteen scientists and biochemists make up the team studying the treatment.

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Citation: Study: Drug may relieve menopausal symptoms (2015, July 23) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-07-drug-relieve-menopausal-symptoms.html>

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