

Frequently Asked Questions

How is HormoneSynergy different from my “regular” doctor’s approach and treatment?

Many doctors ultimately work for the insurance and pharmaceutical industries, since their office visit times and diagnosis codes must meet insurance company definitions, and their treatments are limited to drugs that pharmaceutical companies market to them. HormoneSynergy focuses on prevention of age-related diseases, not merely managing symptoms or treating diseases once they occur. We’re committed to giving you tools to understand your current health, effective, natural options to slow or reverse aging, and research and information needed to make intelligent health decisions. This approach, combined with medication when necessary, offers a truly preventive and integrated approach to health care.

What testing is available as part of my optimal aging evaluation?

In addition to comprehensive hormone testing, the following optional lab tests may be recommended: complete blood count, comprehensive metabolic panel, LPP Plus® (comprehensive cardiovascular risk), inflammatory markers, oxidative stress and antioxidant levels, telomere testing (to determine biological age of your cells), SNP testing (genetic testing to determine inherited disease risk), and micronutrient testing (to determine nutritional status). Lab testing depends on your current health status, family history, optimal aging goals, insurance coverage, and budget.

In addition to lab testing, Dr. Retzler recommends yearly mammograms or other breast imaging for women, and digital rectal exams (prostate exam) for men. Dr. Retzler also recommends accurately measuring your fat and lean body mass percentages by bioimpedence analysis (BIA) testing. BIA testing can be performed at our office.

Can I perform testing before my appointment?

New Patients who choose the **HormoneSynergy Optimal Aging Assessment** for their first visit or sign up for the **HormoneSynergy Optimal Aging Wellness Plan** receive Comprehensive Laboratory Testing PRIOR to their first visit. Initial laboratory testing fees are included in both of these options.

If you choose fee for service care, Dr. Retzler will order appropriate lab testing (based on your health history, current symptoms, family history, physical exam, and other pertinent factors) at the time of your first appointment. You may have your blood drawn at our office and sent out to a lab, or we will give you a lab form to take to another blood draw location. You must use fee for service care if you are seeking insurance reimbursement for your laboratory fees. We invite you to bring past lab results to your appointment or send a release of records form to your previous physician to have lab work sent directly to us.

What if I don’t have insurance or my insurance company does not cover lab testing?

If you don't have insurance or have a high deductible or co-pay, we've negotiated significantly lower fees with **Access Medical Laboratory** as a courtesy to you. If you choose to use Access Medical Labs through our office, payment in full is due at the time of your blood draw. Any additional fees due to lab tests added after your blood draw are your responsibility. Dr. Retzler does not make any profit from lab testing and assumes a liability and added cost in providing this service to you.

Does Dr. Retzler accept insurance or is she on any insurance panels?

Dr. Retzler’s office does not bill any insurance companies nor is she on any insurance panels.

Unfortunately, insurance companies try and determine the time allowed for patient visits and often the type of treatment. Dr. Retzler’s unique and successful approach to hormone balance and optimal aging often falls outside the “standard of care” approach as put forth by the insurance industry to limit their costs

and increase profits. Insurance billing costs and restrictions would prevent her from providing you the thorough, individualized care that you and other patients deserve.

As a courtesy, our office provides insurance claim forms to attempt reimbursement on your own. Many patients do successfully get reimbursed for some or all of their treatment, depending upon their insurance plan. In addition, required lab testing and prescriptions are often covered by insurance companies.

How can I afford this kind of care when my insurance doesn't cover it?

HormoneSynergy and Dr. Retzler have designed your optimal aging care to be as affordable as possible. The information Dr. Retzler provides for you, combined with your translation of that knowledge into action, may save you thousands of dollars. Consider the current cost of long-term care according to the AARP: \$206 per day for a private room in a nursing home (more than \$6000 per month) or \$98 per day (nearly \$3000 per month) for an assisted living unit. That's \$35,000 to \$75,000 per year for long term care. Can you or your family afford this?

Many people who seek optimal health and longevity consider the money they spend a smart investment. Some people set up flexible spending or health saving accounts through their employer or accountant -- this enables the money spent on health care to be tax-exempt.

What if my primary care physician tells me that my lab results are normal?

Many times “normal” is not optimal. Sometimes physicians tell patients that health decline is inevitable with aging. Low hormone levels often get dismissed as “normal for your age”. Unless your physician is trained in optimal aging medicine, it is unlikely that he or she will be able to guide you in appropriate lab testing and interpretation, as well as treatment options. We recommend you treat all your health care providers as team members and consultants – gather information and advice before making important decisions about your health.

What if my doctor tells me there is no research on bioidentical hormones?

He or she is wrong. There is a difference between “no research” and not knowing about or having read the research. It's much easier for busy practitioners to dismiss patients, than it is to question their beliefs and read the research. Please refer to the [Resources](#) page for data on bioidentical hormones and feel free to share this information with your current physician.

Why doesn't my doctor prescribe bioidentical hormones?

He or she may prescribe some bioidentical hormones since there are several pharmaceutical options. However, pharmaceutical companies only make money on patented drugs which they market directly to physicians. Since natural substances cannot be patented, synthetic hormones are often used, or the delivery method for bioidentical hormones is patented. These hormones are only available in a few dosages, and may or may not be the right dosage or mode of delivery for your body. No two people are alike when it comes to their hormone blueprint, so a one-size-fits-all pharmaceutical is often inadequate to meet your individual needs.

Your primary care doctor may also not know about all the options for bioidentical hormone replacement or s/he may not understand the research. In addition, testing and monitoring bioidentical hormones takes experience and education, something for which busy primary care doctors may not have time.

Will I have to take hormones for the rest of my life?

There are two main perspectives when it comes to hormone replacement – use the lowest dosage for the shortest time possible only to treat symptoms, or use individualized dosages for longer periods of time to treat symptoms, maintain youthfulness, and prevent diseases of aging. Both perspectives require proper

evaluation of your specific risks, as well as appropriate follow-up. Dr. Retzler believes it is your choice whether or not to replace deficient hormones, and supports you in becoming informed about risks, benefits, and treatment options.

Where do I get my BHRT prescription filled?

If your BHRT prescription is not a pharmaceutical medication, we will fax it to a specialized pharmacy known as a compounding pharmacy. All compounding pharmacies are required by law to meet the requirements set by the resident state boards of pharmacy. Compounded medications are made from pure, FDA-approved hormones and are made into individualized dosages. Compounding options include sustained-release capsules, creams, gels, lozenges, or pellets.

Not all compounding pharmacies are equal — they can vary in terms of the expertise of the pharmacist making your medication, quality control, customer service, and price. Ideally, the compounding pharmacy you use should be accredited by the Pharmacy Compounding Accreditation Board (PCAB). The PCAB assures consumers that the compounding pharmacies it certifies have demonstrated superior quality and safety in compounding practices. Our office has extensive experience with several compounding pharmacies and will be happy to recommend one for you.

What are subcutaneous hormone pellets?

Subcutaneous hormone pellets are one of several forms of bioidentical hormones available. Like other forms of BHRT, hormone pellets replenish hormones that are lost during the aging process. Pellets have been used since the 1940s and, unlike other forms of BHRT, they are very convenient. Pellets are painlessly inserted in fat tissue and deliver a steady amount of hormone into the bloodstream over 4-6 months. Hormone pellets dissolve completely and only need to be inserted 2-3 times a year. For more information about pellets, see [Pellet FAQ](#).

How long before I see results?

That depends on your hormone imbalance and the treatment chosen. When bioidentical hormones are used, some symptoms resolve in days. Achieving complete hormone balance and resolution of hormone-related symptoms generally takes time. Usually, the more informed and committed you are, the quicker you will see results.

Do hormones cause breast cancer?

Currently every 50-year-old woman has about a 2.8% chance of developing breast cancer by age 60. This translates to an absolute risk of 2.8 breast cancer cases out of 100 women. When evaluating information regarding hormone use and breast cancer risk it's imperative to determine what type of hormone is being discussed – such as synthetic estrogen, progestins, or methyl-testosterone versus bioidentical hormones – and what mode of delivery is used – such as oral, pellet, or vaginal. In addition, how many years a woman uses the hormone is important. For detailed information regarding estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone supplementation with regard to breast cancer, as well as risk factors for breast cancer, please see “Hormones & Breast Cancer” on the [Resources](#) page.

Does testosterone cause prostate cancer?

Historically, testosterone was thought to cause prostate cancer. In fact, if your testosterone level is low, your doctor may still believe that giving you bioidentical testosterone will lead to cancer and he or she may caution you against it. Recently, several investigators published a meta-analysis, aimed at determining any link between hormones and prostate cancer. *[Roddam AW, Allen NE, Appleby P, et al. Endogenous sex hormones and prostate cancer: a collaborative analysis of 18 prospective studies. J Natl Cancer Inst 2008;100:170-83.]*

Overall, data from nearly 4,000 prostate cancer patients and more than 6,000 control subjects (men without prostate cancer) was pooled. No association was seen between the risk of prostate cancer and levels of testosterone, free testosterone, or dihydrotestosterone (DHT).

Curiously, some studies have shown an association between low testosterone levels and prostate cancer. In addition, other studies have reported that a low testosterone level is associated with more aggressive prostate cancers (advanced pathological stage and higher Gleason score). A recent pivotal study strongly suggests that testosterone supplementation does not lead to prostate cancer. [Marks LS, Mazer NA, Mostaghel E, et al. Effect of testosterone replacement therapy on prostate tissue in men with late-onset hypogonadism: a randomized controlled trial. JAMA 2006;296:2351-61.]

For more information about prostate cancer, see "Prostate Cancer" handout on [Resources](#) page.

Can Dr. Retzler recommend hormones for me if I'm not a patient?

Dr. Retzler only prescribes hormones for established patients. Some hormone imbalance symptoms can be treated without hormone replacement. Information about products that can optimize hormone balance is available at our [Online Store](#).

What if I live outside of Oregon?

We welcome you as a patient if you live out of state, and we currently help patients in nearly every state across the US, including some foreign countries. Dr. Retzler must see you in person in order to provide any prescriptions. If you'd like to become a patient, we will arrange a phone consult to order lab work in advance so you can receive treatment recommendations at the time of your appointment. In addition, if you've already received a diagnosis or treatment recommendation from another health care provider and would like another opinion, we can arrange a phone consult with Dr. Retzler. Keep in mind that no prescriptions will be given without an office visit in person.

Will Dr. Retzler recommend supplements as part of my treatment?

Our clinic has an extensive medecinary of pharmaceutical-quality supplements that are often recommended and/or prescribed. Dr. Retzler has compiled this medecinary over the years based on the quality and effectiveness of each item. Supplement recommendations are based solely on medical need. Please keep in mind that following your treatment plan as well as dietary and lifestyle recommendations (including supplements) as provided by Dr. Retzler will greatly affect your outcome.

What should I consider when purchasing supplements from HormoneSynergy or anywhere else?

It's important to keep in mind that not all products are alike, no matter what the label or packaging may claim. Make sure the supplements you take are manufactured in facilities that have pharmaceutical certification or are certified for good manufacturing practices (GMP) by the NPA (Natural Products Association), NSF (National Sanitation Foundation) International, or TGA (Therapeutic Goods Administration of Australia).

Note: there is a difference between GMP compliance and GMP certification. GMP compliance means the company monitors itself for adherence to GMP standards. GMP certification means an independent organization monitors the company for GMP standards.

It's very expensive to become GMP certified; however, this certification ensures that the products you use are of exceptional quality. Besides coming from GMP-certified companies, ideally the supplements you take should be scientifically evaluated to verify the presence and concentration of active constituents. Very few supplement manufacturers conduct clinical trials on their formulas to document safety and

effectiveness. This is because research is very expensive to perform. However, purchasing supplements with documented safety and effectiveness is a reliable investment in your health.

In addition to quality assurance and evaluation via clinical trials, look for optimal forms of nutrients and dosages. Consider the supplements you take to be as important as any medications prescribed by your doctor; in fact, you may consider them to be more important than medications since they can help you prevent the “polypharmacy” that is standard of care for aging Americans (remember, 25% of all Medicare patients use 6 or more drugs every day).

Will Dr. Retzler assume my medical care and act as my Primary Care Physician?

Although Dr. Retzler performs some primary care services, she is not available seven days a week and will not assume the role of your primary care physician.