

The later years – information for women exposed to DES

The Royal Women's Hospital Fact Sheet / www.thewomens.org.au



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Menopause and HRT

To date, the age of menopause appears to be no different in DES exposed women. The relative benefits of hormone replacement therapy, HRT (with natural oestrogen and progesterone) have to be considered by all women, including DES exposed daughters. These benefits include alleviation of symptoms such as hot flushes, tiredness, depression and protection against osteoporosis and heart attack and stroke. DES exposed women should not be denied these benefits but as we have no long-term studies available as yet – because DES daughters are only now entering menopause – HRT should be considered with caution.

Auto-immune diseases

There has been an increase in the incidence of auto-immune diseases such as thyroid malfunction and rheumatoid arthritis. These are a group of diseases where the body's immune system mistakenly destroys its own tissues (of thyroid gland, joint linings etc.). These conditions are not common in the community but there is a slightly higher incidence amongst DES exposed women.

Breast cancer

Research is limited on the risks of developing breast cancer for DES daughters, but a 2006 study found a slightly higher risk in DES daughters aged 40 and over. A special DES check-up every year, along with annual clinical breast examination and mammography, once you have reached 40 years of age, is recommended.

Where to get more information

The DES Follow Up Clinic

Suite C, Frances Perry Consulting Suites
2nd Floor, Royal Women's Hospital
Cnr Grattan St & Flemington Rd
Parkville VIC 3052
Tel: (03) 9344 5077 for an appointment.

All patients of the DES Clinic require a medical referral from a general practitioner and their Medicare card.

Women's Health Information Centre (Victoria only)

The Royal Women's Hospital
Tel: (03) 8345 3045 or 1800 442 007 (rural callers)
Email: whic@thewomens.org.au

DES Action, Australia

P.O. Box 282
Camberwell VIC 3124
Web: <http://www.desaction.org.au>

DES Action is a non-profit, voluntary organisation which operates as a self-help group for DES mothers and daughters. DES Action offers information, support and lobbying for health issues that affect women.

Related fact sheets

- DES exposure
- DES daughters, sons and mothers
- Gynaecological changes in DES exposed daughters
- Pre-baby years for women exposed to DES
- Pregnancy - information for women exposed to DES