

Does Hormone Replacement Therapy Increase Women's Risk for Cataracts?

Women who used hormone replacement therapy (HRT) may be significantly more likely to have [cataract surgery](#) compared with women who never used HRT, says a recent study of more than 30,000 Swedish postmenopausal women. If this is confirmed by future research, [cataract](#) may be added to the list of potential health risks of HRT use.

In the study, cataract removal risk increased with the length of time women used HRT. Those who took more than one alcoholic drink per day while on HRT had almost double the risk of women who used neither HRT nor alcohol. Smoking did not have a significant effect in this study. Researchers adjusted the data for women's exposure to birth control pills and other estrogen medicines, and for other reproductive and health factors. Earlier large studies on HRT and cataract risk in the United States, Australia and Europe had mixed results; importantly some of these studies included women who were premenopausal and so possibly protected by their body's natural estrogen. The Swedish study's population was unique in some ways that may have affected the results: for example, all women had equal access to care and nearly all had the same ethnic background. The study did not identify type of HRT, [type of cataract](#), or measure exposure to sunlight ([too much sun exposure is a cataract risk factor](#), although less likely to affect people living in northern Europe).

For more details, read the [press release](#) on this study.

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