



This document is an excerpt from the SPHERE Centre for Research Excellence November 2024 submission to the Public consultation on items for consideration by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC).

SPHERE recommended ESTRADIOL- Estrogel, Menopausal hormone therapy for consideration.

***March 2025 update:** the Federal Government has announced that from March 1st, estradiol, Estrogel will be available on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), substantially reducing the cost of access.*

## About SPHERE

SPHERE, the NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health in Primary Care, is a collaborative research centre comprising national and international experts in sexual and reproductive health. The National Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health Coalition, led by SPHERE, was formed in 2020 to advocate for improved and equitable women's sexual and reproductive health care in Australia.

The Coalition is a cross-sectoral, multidisciplinary alliance comprising over 150 clinician experts, consumers, representatives from peak bodies and key stakeholder organisations and eminent Australian and international researchers who have a shared vision for improving women's sexual and reproductive health. The Coalition includes national and international representatives from universities, government, industry and peak bodies. We make evidence-informed recommendations to improve women's access to sexual and reproductive health care across the life course from reproductive years to menopause. This includes addressing the financial cost of care, which continues to be one of the most prohibitive factors affecting women's choices.

## How is the medical/health condition currently treated?

When women enter menopause, estrogen synthesis decreases, which can cause symptoms including hot flashes, vaginal dryness, itchiness and dysuria. Almost all women experience symptoms, however, in some cases these can be particularly severe and prolonged. In such instances, Estradiol is a hormone medication that can be used to manage these symptoms and is the most effective treatment for hot flashes in particular.

**What do you see as the advantages of this proposed medicine, in particular for those with the medical condition and/or family and carers?**



Prescribing Estradiol is an effective option for the management of perimenopause and menopause symptoms including hot flashes, night sweats, vaginal dryness, itchiness and dysuria. In particular, it can reduce the frequency and severity of hot flashes by up to 85% (1). Topical oestrogen is regarded as the safest delivery method due to the reduced risk of venous thrombo-embolism compared to oral preparations (1). Topical delivery may also be better for those with migraines (1).

For most women, these symptoms occur in perimenopause and can persist for several years. For women navigating this life stage, affordable access to Estradiol can substantially improve their quality of life and overall health outcomes. Additional benefits to using Estradiol in the post-menopause stage include a potential benefit to mood, cardiovascular health and in protecting bone health and prevention of osteoporosis.

Hormonal fluctuations during this period can cause mood swings, irritability, anxiety and depression. Estradiol helps to stabilise hormone levels and reduce the likelihood of experiencing these symptoms (2). Adding Estradiol as PBS listed item would make this a more financially accessible option for women in the management of perimenopause/menopause symptoms.

1. Australian Menopause Society.  
[https://www.menopause.org.au/images/stories/infosheets/docs/AMS\\_Oestrogen\\_only\\_MH .pdf](https://www.menopause.org.au/images/stories/infosheets/docs/AMS_Oestrogen_only_MH.pdf). 2017.
2. Australian Menopause Centre. World Health Day: Let's Talk About Access to Menopause Treatments - Australian Menopause Centre. 2023.

### What do you see as the main disadvantages of this proposed medicine?

Women need to understand the risk and benefits of menopausal hormone replacement including the risk of breast cancer. For most women with severe symptoms the benefits of use outweigh the risks (1).

1. Australian Menopause Society.  
[https://www.menopause.org.au/images/factsheets/What\\_is\\_MHT\\_and\\_is\\_it\\_safe\\_V7.pdf](https://www.menopause.org.au/images/factsheets/What_is_MHT_and_is_it_safe_V7.pdf)

### Additional comments

Estrogen is the most effective treatment for menopausal hot flashes and where there are no contraindications should be available to all women.

