



Your important role in the WHI Calcium and Vitamin D Program

2002

Historic Hormone Program Findings for Women

In July 2002, the WHI asked women in the Estrogen plus Progestin part of the Hormone Program to stop taking their study pills. This happened three years early. Although there were some benefits found to taking estrogen plus progestin pills, overall risks outweighed benefits. More women taking estrogen and progestin developed breast cancer, heart attacks, strokes, or blood clots in the lungs and legs than women taking placebo pills. On the positive side, fewer numbers of women taking estrogen plus progestin had hip and other fractures and fewer developed colorectal cancer than did women taking placebo pills.

The results of the Estrogen plus Progestin study surprised the medical community by challenging widespread beliefs about the benefit of estrogen plus progestin. In a similar fashion, widespread beliefs about calcium and vitamin D also need to be tested and proven. It is for this reason that we are continuing the Calcium and Vitamin D Program to test whether calcium and vitamin D can prevent fractures and colorectal cancer.

Is the Calcium and Vitamin D Program of the study continuing?

Yes! The Calcium and Vitamin D (CaD) Program of the WHI is continuing. Your participation in the CaD Program is more important now than ever. Take your study pills and attend your regularly scheduled clinic visits, just as you always have. Results from the Estrogen plus Progestin study emphasize the need to explore other ways to reduce the risk of bone fractures and colorectal cancer in women. We're grateful for your ongoing commitment to the study and look forward to working with you in the future to find these very important answers.

Why is the Calcium and Vitamin D Program of the WHI so important?

The Estrogen plus Progestin part of WHI was a landmark study that finally gave women clear-cut information about the risks and benefits of taking this form of hormone replacement therapy. Although women taking estrogen plus progestin experienced fewer hip and other fractures and were less likely to develop colorectal cancer, they were more likely to develop heart disease and

breast cancer. Thus, other ways of preventing fractures and colorectal cancer are needed. We still don't know if calcium and vitamin D might reduce the risk of fractures and colorectal cancer without *increasing* the risk of other diseases, so we are testing this in the CaD Program. The independent data safety monitoring committee of the WHI continues to monitor the CaD Program to ensure your safety. So please continue your WHI participation and let's work together to find the answers!

What if I'm in the Dietary Study, too?

Please continue with your participation in the Dietary Study of the WHI, too. See the handout, *Your Important Role in the WHI Dietary Study*.

What if I'm also in the Estrogen-Along Study?

Please continue taking your study pills as before. The balance of benefits and risks remains uncertain for women taking estrogen only compared to placebo. Following the early release of the Estrogen plus Progestin study results, it became clear that millions of women across the

country, and their physicians, are more eager than ever to learn the overall results of the Estrogen-Alone study when it is completed. To get the most accurate results possible, it is important that study participants continue to take their study pills, unless they have a medical or other reason that requires stopping the pills.

How do these results apply to me if I'm taking or thinking about taking hormones?

We encourage you to talk with your primary health care provider about questions you may have about your personal health care. If you would like detailed information about the findings of the Estrogen plus Progestin study, we have prepared a special packet of information for your health care provider that we can give to you or send directly to your provider. Based on the information in the packet, you and your health care provider can talk about what's best for you. If you decide to take or continue taking hormones, we need this information so that we can study whether the

combination of hormones and calcium and vitamin D has beneficial effects on fractures and colorectal cancer.

How can I find out more?

This update reviews the information available now. You can also find more details on the study website (<http://www.whi.org>). WHI scientists will also do more data analyses over the coming weeks and months. As results become available, we will inform you through newsletters and updates to the study website. You may also talk to people at your Clinical Center if you have questions, comments, or concerns.

Thank you!

We can't thank you enough for your part in the WHI, this landmark study of women's health. The time and effort you have given to the WHI makes it possible to answer many important health questions for postmenopausal women in the United States. We have more work to do and hope that you will join with us in continuing this effort.

