

**QUESTION OF THE WEEK****Q:** What are bio-identical hormones?

Bio-identical or natural hormones are extracted from either soybeans or wild yams. They are further processed in the laboratory to manufacture hormones that are bio-chemically similar to those the human body produces. Pharmaceutical estrogens may be bio-identical or not, synthetic or from a natural substance like mare's urine.

In other words, it is the chemical structure — not the source — that differentiates the bio-identical



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from the non bio-identical hormone.

It has not been proven whether one form of estrogen is safer than the other. The safety profile is found in the delivery. Oral estrogens have been associated with more venous thromboembolism than the transdermal route. Saliva testing has no place in managing hormones at this time. It is best to start with the lowest dose to relieve symptoms.

Your OB/GYN doctor is a trained expert in the field of menopause and hormones.

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