



August 7, 2008

Patients thrilled with therapy's results

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Hormone deficiency is most often associated with decreased estrogen in menopausal women, but both sexes can experience low energy, decreased sex drive, inability to focus, irritability and weight gain as testosterone levels drop after age 25 to 30, says Dr. Bruce Worrell, who has been using a new pellet method of bio-identical hormone replacement therapy for a year.

Although bio-identical hormones - said to have the same molecular structure as human hormones - and pellet therapy are not new, the SottoPelle method, founded by Dr. Gino Tutera in 1992, is different, Worrell says.

Unlike other hormone pellets, the amount and type of hormones are tailored to each person's age, size and hormone deficiency, found through a blood test. The pellets, made from cholesterol extracted from soy beans or other plants, including yams, are implanted under the skin to provide a consistent release of hormones, unlike creams or patches, Worrell says.

"The only way to get a stable level like you have when you're in your 20s is to give the body a reservoir that it can get when it's needed," Worrell says.

Most SottoPelle clients have tried to treat their symptoms through mainstream therapies. Men - who make up 40 percent of Worrell's clients - often have been prescribed Viagra to treat a low libido, while women have been told to "drink some wine and light some candles," Worrell says. Younger women suffering from low energy have been advised to change their eating habits or ramp up their exercise.

Like many women her age, Sara Michael, 49, of Loveland, was prescribed an anti-depressant by her gynecologist to treat the low libido, mental fogging, anxiety and bouts of depression she had been experiencing for five to seven years as a result of perimenopause.

"To me, the anti-depressant is like if there's a fire in your house and you simply go over and turn the alarm off. It's not addressing the problem," says Michael, who had her first SottoPelle treatment three months ago.

The procedure takes less than 10 minutes. After numbing the area, Worrell creates a small incision and inserts the pellets into fatty tissue in the buttocks through a tube-like needle.

Women typically get two to three pellets, which last up to four months, and men get six to 10, which last up to five months.

Within a couple weeks, Michael says she felt balanced, energized and focused, with a zest for life she thought was long gone.

"I feel like myself again, but not hyped up. Like I'm 30, 35 again."

Anne Zimmer of Mount Healthy had her first implant in April to treat menopausal symptoms following a hysterectomy. Zimmer, 44, is weaning off anti-depression medication she's been on for years, and

has lost 50 pounds.

Lisa Brown, who has diabetes, credits the treatments for stabilizing her blood sugar levels, which began fluctuating wildly when the 50-year-old began going through menopause a couple of years ago.

SottoPelle clients also say the treatments change how the body responds to exercise.

Dan Thieken - who attributed his low energy and lack of mental clarity to age, a busy lifestyle, lack of sleep and eight children in the house - is seeing results from a strenuous workout regime and healthier eating habits begun last year.

"I've seen a definite reduction in body fat, and just have more energy overall," says Thieken, 48.

Although couples are shy to talk about it, that newfound energy often spills over into their relationship.

"It's amazing what this can do for marriages. I wouldn't have wanted to stay married to myself," Michael says of her menopausal symptoms.

Other than tenderness around the incision area, clients say they didn't experience any adverse effects. Short-term side effects might include breast tenderness, mood swings, fluid retention and acne breakouts, Worrell says.

"It's like being a teenager again: You're getting these hormones that you haven't had in years," says the doctor's wife, Gina Worrell, who receives the hormone pellet therapy.



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Hormone pellets make folks feel better

*By Amy Howell
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Pellets made from soy and yams are being credited for helping men and women save their marriages, lose weight, boost mental focus and stop taking anti-depressant medication.

"We all just write off (not feeling up to par) to getting old, but all the research shows it doesn't have to be this way," says Dan Thieken, a client of Dr. Bruce Worrell at the Center for Optimal Vitality in Mason.

Worrell is one of only about 100 physicians in the country trained in the SottoPelle method of bio-identical hormone replacement therapy, and the only physician in the area who offers the procedure to the public. After just a year, Worrell has more than 200 clients and opened a second location in Mount Healthy last week. .

"This isn't like a normal doctor's office. Our patients really want to come in," says Worrell, who has practiced internal medicine for 26 years.

What's the cost?

A first-time visit to receive SottoPelle bio-identical hormone replacement therapy at the Center for Optimal Vitality costs about \$400 for women and \$500-\$600 for men.

This includes a consultation with Dr. Bruce Worrell.

The cost to maintain the therapy, through inserting new pellets every four months for women and every five months for men, runs \$260-\$295, Worrell says.

Most insurance companies cover the blood tests required to determine a client's hormone counts, but coverage varies. Some patients are fully reimbursed if they receive a certain dosage. Others receive no coverage because Worrell is considered an out-of-network provider, and some patients are reimbursed a percentage of the cost because the procedure is considered "preventive."
