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# Focus on Health

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## Suzanne Somers

**A** new book, "The Sexy Years", has just been published on the subject of menopause and bioidentical hormone replacement. It is written by TV actress and author Suzanne Somers and I highly recommend it for all women, and all men as well.

**A**mong postmenopausal women who tried to stop taking hormones (replacement or substitution) as a result of the Women's Health Initiative Study, 26% resumed treatment within 5.7 months, primarily because of troublesome and uncomfortable symptoms. Now that figure is up to 50%.

## Breast Exams?

**A**fter many years of recommending breast self-examination monthly to detect lumps and facilitate early detection of breast cancer, the Breast Cancer Advisory Group of the American Cancer Society has updated its guidelines (finally). Breast self-examination is now described as "optional". This reflects the fact that studies have failed to show a reduction in breast cancer mortality in those women who do BSE (breast self-examination). Still, other studies show up to 48% of breast cancers are self-detected, so they conclude that "women should be encouraged to be aware of how their breasts look and feel in order to be able to recognize any changes and promptly report them". Confusing?

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## Move Over Viagra

**A** new drug is now available for erectile dysfunction. The drug is called "Cialis" and has been available in Europe for several years. It has become known as "the weekend pill" because its effect starts in 30 minutes and lasts 36 hours. It replaces Viagra and Levitra, which are short acting. It also is effective for women to improve sexual response to visual, tactile, or other erotic stimuli, producing increased genital blood flow with resultant increased vaginal lubrication in women whose blood estradiol and testosterone levels are normal. Cialis has a drug insert that states that it is not for women or children. Obviously no physician would recommend it for children, male or female. However, in my practice, I have found it works as well for women, provided they have normal blood estradiol and testosterone levels, as it does for men. It is just as safe for women as it is for men.

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## Inflated Cost of Drugs

**D**id you ever wonder how much it costs a drug company for the active ingredient in prescription medication versus the amount you, the consumer, pay for the drug when you buy it at your local pharmacy? Here are some examples of the percentage price markup to you when you buy the following drugs. Lipitor - 4,696%, Keflex - 8,372%, Prozac - 224,973%, Xanax - 569,958%, Prilosec - 69,417%. With the potent pharmaceutical lobby in Congress, no controls of any kind are likely to emerge anytime soon. The new Medicare law will simply magnify the obscene profits they are already making. They say they need these profits for research. Then why do they spend more on advertising than they do on research?

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