



# The Estrogen Elixir

*Elizabeth Siegel Watkins*

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## **The Estrogen Elixir** Elizabeth Siegel Watkins

In the first complete history of hormone replacement therapy (HRT), Elizabeth Siegel Watkins illuminates the complex and changing relationship between the medical treatment of menopause and cultural conceptions of aging. Describing the development, spread, and shifting role of HRT in America from the early twentieth century to the present, Watkins explores how the interplay between science and society shaped the dissemination and reception of HRT and how the medicalization and subsequent efforts toward the demedicalization of menopause and aging affected the role of estrogen as a medical therapy. Telling the story from multiple perspectives physicians, pharmaceutical manufacturers, government regulators, feminist health activists, and the media, as well as women as patients and consumers she reveals the striking parallels between estrogen's history as a medical therapy and broad shifts in the role of medicine in an aging society. Today, information about HRT is almost always accompanied by a laundry list of health risks. While physicians and pharmaceutical companies have striven to develop the safest possible treatment for the symptoms of menopause and aging, many specialists question whether HRT should be prescribed at all. Drawing from a wide range of scholarly research, archival records, and interviews, *The Estrogen Elixir* provides valuable historical context for one of the most pressing debates in contemporary medicine.

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