

Managing Menopause



Or Dancing Through Puberty Backwards

By

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Menopause



- ☞ The term menopause rises from the Greek terms men-month and pausis-cessation. The medical definition from Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary is 1) that period which marks the permanent cessation of menstrual activity 2) may occur between ages of 35 and 58. The majority of women experience cessation of menses between ages 47 and 52.

General, cont.



- ☞ Clinically we assess it as the permanent cessation of ovulation and menstrual flow for 12 months. It may occur as a natural part of aging, or may be induced by surgical or medical treatment.
- ☞ While some women experience little to no discomfort or medical issues during the perimenopausal period, others have severe exacerbations of established medical conditions or an onset of new symptoms

Menopausal Risks



- ❧ Cardiovascular Disease Risk rises sharply for women after menopause. This may be reflected in atherosclerosis, hypertension, angina and even heart attack and stroke.
- ❧ Osteoporosis is considered a risk after menopause as estrogen buffers the action of bone breakdown
- ❧ Weight gain is common, and may progress to obesity
- ❧ But are these really due to menopause?

Menopausal Risks, cont.



- ❧ The foundation for many of these conditions was laid down years before menopause occurs. While there are genetic contributors to the development of these conditions, our lifestyles have a major impact on the development or the severity of the problem. And luckily, lifestyle change can reduce the severity or sometimes reverse the occurrence of these conditions. But first, you must get through the menopausal process...

Positive Symptoms



☞ No More Menstrual Periods

- ☞ Dysmenorrhea

- ☞ Menorrhagia

- ☞ Mittelschmerz

- ☞ No risk of pregnancy

☞ Rational Mind is more clear, and I am not influenced by hormonal shifts any longer

- ☞ Stable mood

Less Desirable Symptoms



- ☞ Hot Flashes
- ☞ Night Sweats
- ☞ Vaginal Atrophy and Painful Intercourse
- ☞ Loss of Libido
- ☞ Thinning of Hair above and below the diaphragm
- ☞ Insomnia
- ☞ Urinary Frequency and Urgency due to atrophy

Less Desirable, cont.



- ❧ Anxiety, irritability, and labile mood
- ❧ Depression
- ❧ Memory changes
- ❧ Difficulty concentrating
- ❧ Fatigue, often due to insomnia or changes in sleep patterns
- ❧ Skin changes

Treatment



☞ Nothing

☞ For some women without symptoms or those with mild symptoms this is a viable option. It is good to meet with your physician and discuss a plan to support your overall health- cardiovascular, immune, digestive, musculoskeletal and nervous systems benefit from good support as we age

Treatment, cont.



☞ For All Patients:

- ☞ Nourishment-body, mind and spirit
- ☞ Food should be balanced with protein, complex carbohydrates and healthier fats as the locus of your meals. Eating breakfast, and regularly throughout the day is best for maintaining healthy weight and energy
- ☞ Half the plate or more should be fruits and vegetables, cooked and raw, depending on constitution and on season

Eat With Your Eyes



Variety Every Day



Eat With Our Eyes



Nourishment, Protein



- Protein should be eaten at least twice daily. The majority of your proteins should be combinations of legumes & grains, eggs, fish, poultry and smaller amounts of the 4-legged variety. The less legs on the protein, the easier to digest and break down. The types of protein should be determined by your own health needs, spiritual beliefs and desires.

Complex Carbohydrates



- Complex Carbohydrates are slow burning fuel for energy, and contain fiber for supporting digestion and health. The general optimum is to eat 2-3 servings of fruit, cooked or raw and 4-5 servings of vegetables each day. A serving is $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. This means the majority of our meal is complex carbohydrate. Another source is grains. These are best when eaten in their whole form such as brown rice, corn or quinoa (keen-whah).
- Legumes are also carbohydrates, but when combined with whole grains, become protein as well.

Fats



☞ Fats are necessary for health, especially endocrine and immune health, and also feed our brains. There are fats that benefit our health more clearly such as Essential Fatty Acids, and medium chain fatty acids like coconut oil. A small amount of fat should be consumed at each meal. The amount and types of fat can be determined by your individual health needs.

Nourishment, cont.



☞ In addition to the composition of the meal, it is important to eat in a calm and supportive environment where you can nourish your body, mind and spirit.



Exercise



- ☞ In Naturopathic Medicine, we view the patient and presenting symptoms or problems from the viewpoint of constitution. Are your symptoms rising from deficiency or excess, from dampness or dryness, from heat or cold, from stagnation or excess motion? This allows us to determine which approach to treatment might be most beneficial to you.
- ☞ Exercise helps to balance or restore all the above constitutional presentations.

Exercise, cont.



☞ The type of exercise is your choice.



Exercise, cont.



- ☞ Exercise is especially beneficial for reducing the vasomotor symptoms such as hot flashes and night sweats. It is also helpful for reducing insomnia or changes in your sleep pattern. Since endocrine function is a system itself and interacts so directly with your nervous and immune systems, it helps to reduce the anxiety and stress management issues that can occur with menopause.

Clean Out Your Closets



- ☞ Since menopause involves changes to more than our body, we should also address our minds, emotions and spirit.
- ☞ Clear any clothing that does not fit you NOW from your closet. This includes shoes, clothes, accessories. If there is an emotional attachment to something, preserve it for your family, or cut it up and turn it into something that can be used now like a pillow or quilt. Give the rest away.

Clean Your Closets, cont



- It is hard to dress when half your closet is clothing that no longer fits.
- This is also a time in life where we naturally review our choices, accomplishments, and dreams. There is some sorrow in realizing that some of our dreams may not come to fruition. And yet, recognize that you have created more than you ever would have imagined....and NOW the question is:

What About the Rest of Your Life?



- ☞ What acts, skills, work, play, friends, family, do you want to focus your energy on now?
- ☞ Transition is a perfect time for life review and planning.
- ☞ How do you feed yourself emotionally?
- ☞ What brings you joy? Connection?
- ☞ How do you feed your spirit? Express yourself and your creativity?

Treating the Symptoms



- ☞ Cimicifuga/Actea/Black Cohosh has been used effectively for some women. It has been used for centuries to treat muscle and skeletal pain, but modern interest is in its use for hot flashes, headaches, irritability and sleep disturbances from hot flashes. The herb must be taken for a minimum of 8 weeks to determine whether it is working for you. Full effect may not be seen until 12 weeks have passed.

Chaste Tree Berry



- Often used to treat hot flashes with mood changes during menopause. Its actions are at the level of the pituitary gland and tends to normalize deficient or excessive conditions. It can be a little drying, so is not used in women presenting with excessive dryness. It can be beneficial for women who develop acne or skin rashes during menopause.

Lady's Mantle



- ☞ Lady's Mantle balances the menstrual flow before menopause occurs, and can reduce the irritability and digestive changes some women experience during menopause. It also has a mild anti-inflammatory action on the mucosal surfaces of the body.

St. John's Wort



St. John's Wort is useful in reducing the tension and anxiety some women experience, It calms the nervous system and reduces irritability. It can also reduce the pain or intensity of neuralgic pain. It is a useful addition to reducing insomnia or sleep changes in women who feel sensitized since menopause.

Siberian ginseng



☞ Eleutherococcus does not treat menopause specifically. It reduces the negative impact of stress and change. This makes it a useful addition to menopausal treatment. It can help reduce the symptoms of insomnia by supporting the normal energy production within the body and reduces irritability created by the fatigue. It should be taken morning and mid afternoon, and not in the evening, as it is stimulating to most of us.

Licorice Root



☞ Glycyrrhiza is similar to Siberian ginseng in that it treats the symptoms of menopause by strengthening the body's resistance to damage from stress. It is used as a tonic for the adrenal glands. The herb also has anti-inflammatory actions and protects the cells of the liver and intestines from damage. It is not indicated for people with high blood pressure or taking diuretics, as it may elevate blood pressure.

Hops



☞ Humulus is a superb herb for normalizing sleep. It reduces anxiety, and diminishes irritability and tension. It also can reduce headaches associated with menopause due to the muscle tension. It is often combined with other relaxing herbs like valerian, passion flower, lemon balm, skull cap and linden flower.

Mother wort



☞ Leonurus is a relaxing tonic for addressing stress, tension and heart palpitations associated with menopause. It is often used in combination with the other herbs mentioned here.

White Sage



- ☞ This herb is often used to reduce the hot flashes and temperature lability associated with menopause. It is best used as a cold tea decoction. Pour 1 quart of hot water over white sage leaves and steep in the refrigerator overnight. Strain and drink the tea the next day.
- ☞ Ruth Trickey says to soak 6 chopped sage leaves overnight in lemon juice and strain in the morning and drink the juice. I use this in water throughout the day.

Red Clover



☞ Trifolium has been used to reduce menopausal symptoms like hot flashes, skin changes and protection of the mucosal surfaces in the body. It is a mild “phytoestrogen” that decreases all symptoms and supports the body in rebalancing to the new normal.

Alfalfa



☞ Medicago is a mild phytoestrogen that is also a nutritive plant. It contains many nutrients such as carotenoids, calcium, minerals, vitamin e and vitamin K as well as B vitamins. It reduces hot flashes and supports the body in adapting to the new normal.

Ashwaghandha



☞ Ashwaghandha supports the body to withstand stress so is ideal for treatment of menopausal shifts. It is restorative of energy and helps to restore sleep patterns> It is an adaptogen like licorice root and Siberian ginseng but is not stimulating to the system so indicated for those with anxiety and chronic tension.

Jujube



☞ Zizyphus is an herb for those who do too much. It is a restorative herb that calms the mind yet increases memory, and reduces heart palpitations and dizziness. It calms anxiety and reduces hot flashes and night sweats.

In Conclusion



☞ Menopause is about a transition to a new balance. My grandmother likened it to going through puberty backwards. For some of us it is going backward in high heels, as Ginger Rogers said. I hope this discussion gives you some ideas for improving your health during and after this time in your lives.

☞ Thank you

Sources



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