



Menopause is a natural and normal part of life for women. It is the time when women stop having periods and are no longer fertile. Women are considered to be in menopause after going 12 months without having a period. Menopause usually happens somewhere in a woman's late 40's or early 50's and can cause many changes in a woman's body due to changing hormone levels.

Not all women will experience every symptom listed here. It varies from person to person and that is why medical help is often times needed to assess and balance a woman's hormones during this time of life. It can be challenging to go through so many changes in the body during menopause. Educating yourself and seeking out professional help can be incredibly important.

Signs of Menopause:

« Periods become very irregular

Bleeding may be very heavy or very light.

Periods come less frequently or more often.

Periods last for different amounts of time; longer or shorter

« Hot flashes or night sweats

A sudden feeling of heat, especially around the upper body. The face and neck can get red and flushed. Red blotches may appear and heavy sweating or cold shivering can follow.

« Vaginal dryness

« Decrease in libido (desire to have sex)

« Mood swings, depression, anxiety, or increased irritability

« Loss or thinning of hair, changes in weight, or joint or muscles aches

« Difficulty sleeping and fatigue

« Difficulty concentrating or memory lapses

Possible Health Complications with Menopause:

« Osteoporosis (weakening of the bones)

As estrogen decreases with menopause, bone density can decrease

« Cardiovascular Disease

Chance of getting heart disease can increase with menopause

« Incontinence (urinating accidentally)

Elasticity around the genitals can change causing accidental urination, especially while coughing, laughing, sneezing or exercising

« Weight Gain

Metabolism can slow down so many women need less calories per day and need to exercise to maintain a healthy weight

Treating Menopause Symptoms

Menopause is not something that you can prevent or stop, but it is possible to treat some of the symptoms.

Here are some suggestions:

Eat organic whole foods as much as possible;

- Grass fed meat, organic vegetables and fruits are best.

- Reduce intake of sugar, alcohol, soy, wheat flour and dairy. Limit intake of corn (as this tends to be genetically modified or “GMO”).

- Eat plenty of healthy, natural fat such as avocados, olive oil, organic butter or ghee.

- Drink tea and avoid caffeine if possible to help you relax.

- Talk to a functional nutritionist or integrative healthcare provider for suggestions on how to revamp your diet.

Exercise regularly;

- Strengthen pelvic floor muscles to have better control of your bladder (you can ask your doctor how this works and get referrals to professionals for help in this area if needed)

- Exercise helps you sleep and reduces anxiety, irritability and depression
- Keeps bones strong

- Try exercising a minimum of 3 to 4 days a week with a mix of cardio and strength training.

- (see the Getting Started with Exercise Handout for more information)

Here are some suggestions (cont.) :

Get enough sleep;

Preferably 8 hours a night. Try going to bed at 10pm and getting up at 6am. This can be a good rhythm for the body.

Remove technology devices from your bedroom and stop working a few hours before bed if you can to help your body wind down.

Practice relaxation;

This reduces stress, decreases your heart rate, helps with concentration and mood swings, and makes it easier for you to sleep (see our guided imagery, mindfulness meditation handouts to help you create a practice)

Practicing calming hobbies or participating in activities that make you happy

You can get creative here. Knit. Garden. Raise Chickens. Volunteer. Whatever you enjoy and hopefully adds value to your life and maybe to the lives of others.

Staying connected to close friends and family;

Improves your mood and general well being.

Educate yourself;

Talk to a professional or several professionals. Read books and do online research to further educate yourself on your changing body. Experiment with small changes (based on what you learn) in your routine and your diet to better care for yourself.

Establish a good self care routine;

This can be anything from what you eat for breakfast to the meditation app you listen to or the healthy drink you treat yourself to each week. "Self care" is in the details. Its what we do for ourselves in small ways that make a difference in our day to day experience. These are things that can improve upon the quality of our lives. For instance, maybe jot down on paper 5 things you enjoy and would like to be a part of your week. Then consider how to make them happen, schedule them or alter them a bit to fit into your life. Try it out, make notes about how it went and try again. Self-care does take a little work to implement, particularly if we are not feeling quite like ourselves due to changing hormones.

Medications;

There are various medications available to relieve the symptoms of menopause. Talk with your health care provider to see if any medications may be right for you.

Some Helpful Resources

1. The Adrenal Thyroid Revolution. Aviva Romm, M.D. (avivaromm.com)
2. The Hormone Reset Diet. Sara Gottfried, M.D. (saragottfriedmd.com)
3. Woman Code. Alisa Vitti, HHC. (floliving.com)
4. Stress Less, Accomplish More. Emily Fletcher. (zivameditation.com)