

The Tuesday Minute

Nutritional information.... one byte at a time

This Week's Topic

Reduce Menopausal Symptoms Without Hormones

I once heard an internationally known lecturer say he would rather treat cancer than a tough menopausal case. I tell that incident to make a point. Just because menopause is a natural process in a woman's life, that doesn't mean it will be an easy transition.

With great compassion, I have to acknowledge, for many women it can be a rollercoaster ride. With all the xenoestrogens in our diet and the pressure and stress most women experience in our society, it's not uncommon to have hormonal dysregulation. And with 2 million more women entering menopause each year, we are talking about a growing market.

Menopause is clinically defined as "the permanent, natural cessation of menstruation." A woman is considered menopausal when menstruation has stopped for at least six months and she is over 45 years of age.

Ideally, the ovaries and adrenals produce estrogen and progesterone during the fertile years. The adrenal glands make estrogen by converting the male hormone testosterone to estrogen. But what happens if the adrenal glands are exhausted? Who picks up the slack? Fat cells can also manufacture estrogen, but that's not an appealing option.

After age 40, hormones start their descent; and by the time a woman is post menopausal, estrone is reduced by 60%, estradiol by 90%, and progesterone by 60%. Most women in their 40's begin

perimenopause and can sense subtle hormonal changes.

Although the recommendations here are for menopause, it's not too soon to start rebuilding. Eventually the closer a woman is to her 50's, she may have intense symptoms such as hot flashes (60% of all women experience some form of hot flashes lasting for 1-5 years. 10-20% experience hot flushes for life.)

Other symptoms are night sweats, vaginal dryness, mood swings, headaches, irritability and anxiety, insomnia, weight changes, fatigue, low libido, and heart palpitations.

Diet is extremely important when it comes to limiting the severity of menopausal symptoms. Blood sugar and hormonal fluctuations are connected. If blood sugar is not balanced and regulated, hormonal fluctuations will be more erratic and intense.

Weight gain becomes an uncontrollable problem in most women. Food cravings and hot flashes feel intolerable when blood sugar is not controlled. This is why sugar, refined flours, and too many simple carbohydrates should be strictly avoided.

I have included a hormone balance test. You can print out this simple questionnaire and give it to your patients to help them determine which hormone may be out of balance. Menopause complications can be a result of too much estrogen, estrogen deficiency, improper estrogen ratio or

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estrogen dominance, adrenal fatigue, excess androgens, or progesterone deficiency.

Women can have elevated estrogen levels and still have hot flashes. This test helps to co-ordinate subjective indicators and may give insight if a dominant imbalance exists. As for supplements, my recommendations are more like a shopping cart than a protocol. Everybody has their favorites. Let's look at mine.

First of all, we want to make sure we have a good foundational multivitamin/mineral that is high in magnesium, zinc, and B6. I like Equi-Fem™ but if there is any hint of blood sugar irregularity I use GlucoBalance®.

A naturopathic physician Dr. Michelle Pouliot designed several female formulas based on her exclusively female clientele. With her formulas, 19 out of 20 women were able to reduce their menopausal symptoms without hormones.

The first product, BioPause-AM® is taken in the morning to botanically support the adrenal glands and helps maintain mental acuity. Support but not over-stimulation is the goal. Rhodiola, black cohosh, and chaste berry are the three primary herbs. Patients report that this product is also helpful with heart palpitations, fatigue, mood fluctuations, low sex drive, as well as muscle aches and pains. I generally start with 4 capsules and reduce to 2 as soon as possible.

Generally used with BioPause-AM® is BioPause-PM® designed for a good nights sleep. This product works well to control hot flashes. Black cohosh, passiflora, lemon balm, and magnesium glycinate are the main ingredients. The recommended dose is 2 at bedtime.

If patients desire more help to control hot flashes throughout the day, they can take more. A clinician friend of mine shared how a higher dose completely controls her hot flashes

throughout the day by taking 4-6 at bedtime. This is also helpful with insomnia. The herbs in this formula are helpful to relax.

Speaking of sleep, Neuro-5-HTP Plus™ as well as 5HTP is helpful because they contain 5 HTP which is a precursor to serotonin, melatonin, and other endorphins. Anxiety is a common symptom associated with menopause. Both 5HTP products are helpful for this.

L-Tyrosine is used successfully to reduce or eliminate depression, helps with weight loss, and some headaches. It also is important for normal thyroid function. Some people need minimal amounts like 50-100mg twice a day. Others need higher doses. I've used as much as 1000 mg twice a day with very good results.

Also, we want to make sure we get the essential oils that are necessary to reduce inflammation and assist with hormone production. Dr. Michelle Pouliot likes Evening Primrose Oil at 1000 mg twice a day.

Finally, noted author Ann Louise Gittman likes 2 tablespoons of Flax Seed Oil or 2 tablespoons of ground flax seeds. It's very specific to help fight night sweats, as well as tissue dryness. She recommends the high lignin oils because the lignins are such natural hormone modulators.

As you work with patients, don't forget to stimulate conversation about energy levels, sleep patterns, headaches, heart palpitations, or other symptoms of menopause. Inform them about positive solutions and encourage them to take a wellness approach to what can be a very challenging transition for many women.

Thanks for reading this week's Tuesday Minute. I'll see you next week.