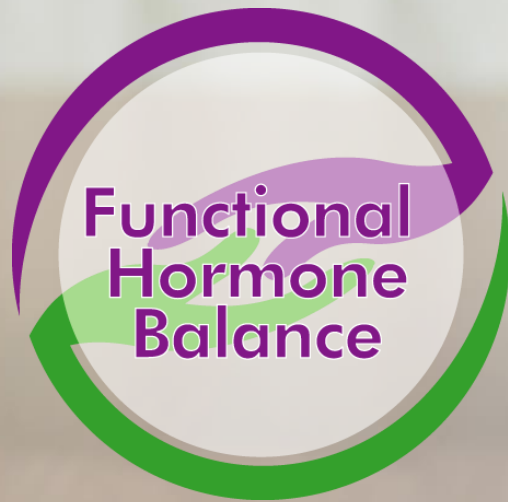


Menopause



Menopause

A normal time of life occurring between ages 45 and 55

It refers to the time when there is 1 full year with no period

“Meno” refers to menses and “pause” refers to cessation

The year previous, with menstrual irregularities occurring, is the perimenopausal phase

This is the best case scenario



Menopause

Hormonal imbalances predating menopause can cause havoc

Unpleasant symptoms occur – this is not normal

Perimenopause can start years earlier with many “menopause” symptoms

The unpleasant symptoms of menopause can last for several years during the perimenopause, menopause and post-menopause stages



Three Stages Of Menopause

1. Perimenopause: Begin to notice changes in the cycle and period. Can start years before they actually go through menopause, especially if estrogen dominant
2. Menopause: Marked by a drop in progesterone, followed by a drop in estrogen. Typically, the period has permanently stopped for 1 full year during menopause. Estrogen dominance and stress make it worse
3. Post-menopause: Ovaries are no longer producing estrogen and progesterone, the adrenal glands must pick up the slack, producing a small amount of progesterone, estrogen, and testosterone

Stress can mess with this process, which may be the biggest reason why women experience symptoms during this time

Hormone Stages Of Menopause

First – Progesterone levels drop (as ovulation becomes irregular)

Second – Estrogen levels drop

Third – Periods stop

Periods must stop for a full year to be “officially” in menopause

Symptoms from perimenopause may persist through menopause and beyond and are a sign of a pre-existing hormonal imbalance

What Is Happening

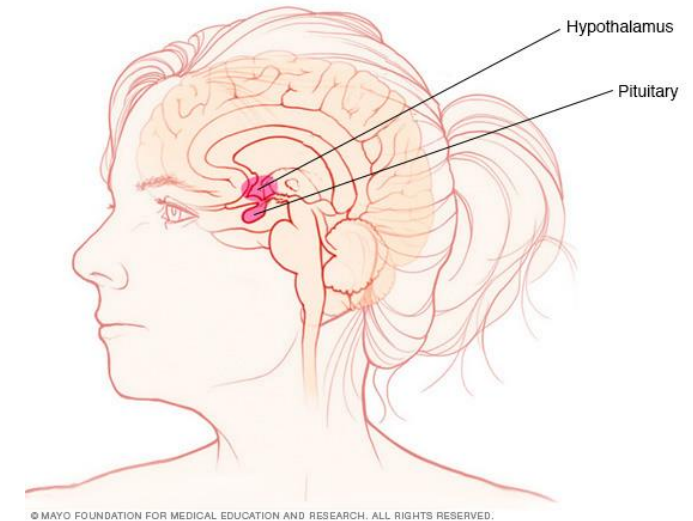
During menopause, the thyroid, ovaries and adrenals all need to function well

Ovulation is not occurring every month so periods become shorter and more infrequent

The pituitary tries to compensate by producing more FSH and LH – this is why the periods don't go off quietly into the sunset

This puts stress on both the thyroid and adrenals

Typical menopause symptoms – mood swings, weight gain and sleep issues – can actually be low thyroid symptoms, even hot flashes have a thyroid connection

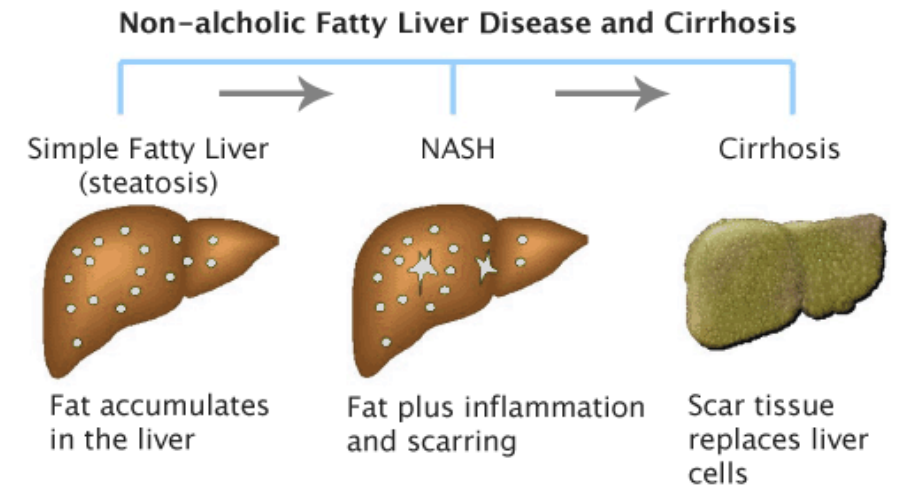


What Is Happening

Adrenals are also experiencing more stress and can contribute to low energy levels, less ability to concentrate, low libido and also contribute to mood swings and hot flashes

It's not uncommon for women during menopause to have low cortisol during the day and higher cortisol at night

Liver is also under stress – estrogen plays a protective role for preventing scarring in the liver, NAFLD and cirrhosis



Issues Of Menopause

- Increased abdominal fat around abdomen is common during menopause
- This increases woman's chance of heart disease and increases insulin resistance
- This could be linked to high cortisol
- A longitudinal study (Swan Study) found a link between insulin resistance and hot flashes and night sweats
- This could be because of dysglycemia and adrenal issues

The Seven Dwarves of Menopause



Itchy, Bitchy, Sweaty, Sleepy, Bloated, Forgetful & Psycho

Issues Of Menopause

- Sleep Issues: Common due to hormone fluctuations with the adrenals and the thyroid playing a key role
- Vaginal Dryness: Estrogen is needed for proper lubrication
- Mood Swings and Depression: Low hormones can affect brain function in the areas that control emotions and can make the nervous system more agitated
- Joint and Muscle Pain: Hormones help lubricate joints and muscles
- Memory Issues: There's a link between estrogen receptors in the brain and memory



After Menopause

It's important to note that many women have low estrogen, low progesterone and/or low testosterone

Low estrogen can cause many issues beyond bone health as there are estrogen receptors throughout the body

Insulin resistance is common when estrogen is low

A woman may experience new gut issues she didn't previously have



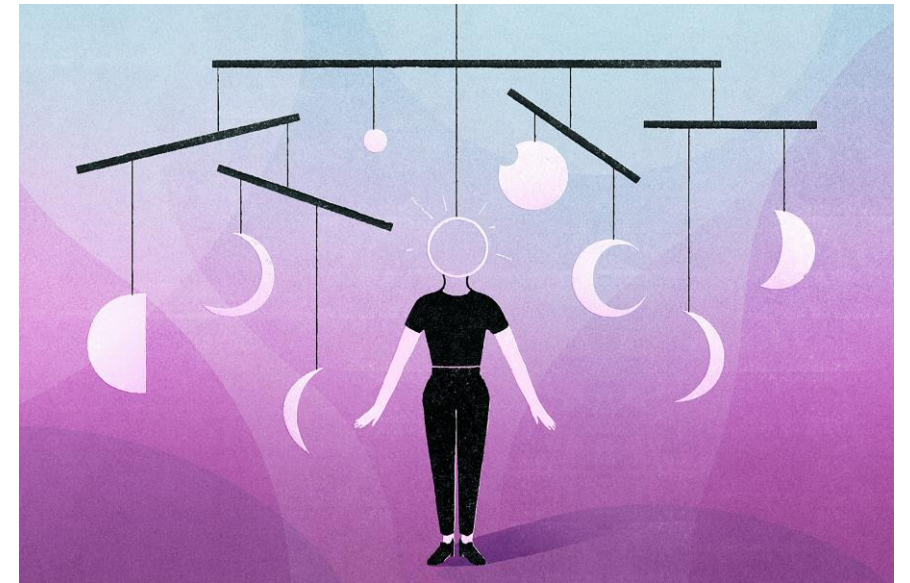
Brain can be foggy – and a woman may be searching for words she knows she knows

Libido and motivation are gone

A woman can be frustrated, feel older than her years

All because she doesn't have the estrogen, progesterone and testosterone she needs for the rest of her life

All this can occur even after hot flashes and other typical menopause symptoms have stopped



Osteoporosis

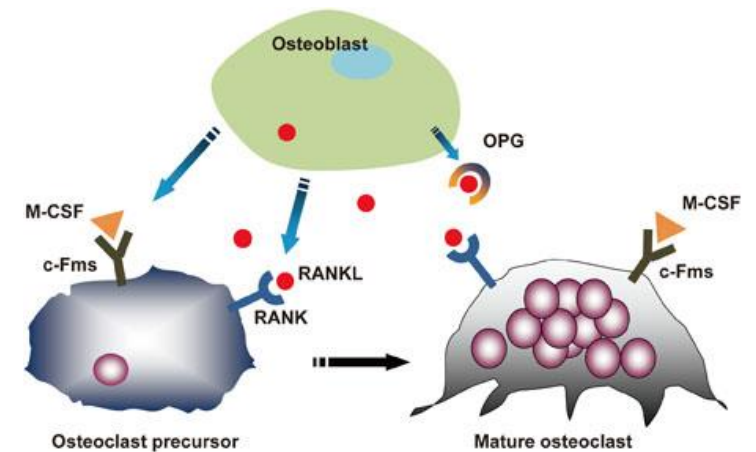
Estrogen, progesterone and testosterone all play a role in bone health

Estrogen interacts with immune system (Il6, TNF-alpha and T cells) and loss of estrogen is associated with bone loss because of the way the immune system is involved with osteoclasts

Progesterone supports the production of osteoblasts

Women at high risk: Small frame, lack of weight-bearing exercise, poor nutrition, chemo and radiation treatments, smoking, drinking, medications

Low testosterone is associated with low bone density



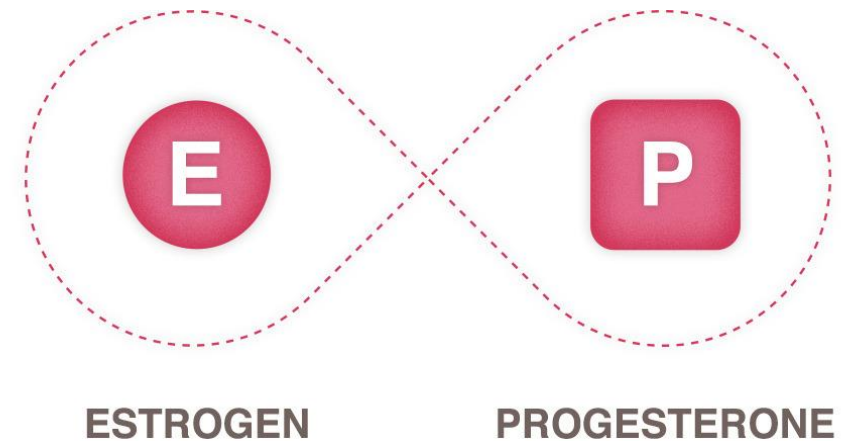
Estrogen Dominance And Menopause

Contradictory time

Excess estrogen exacerbates symptoms related to estrogen/progesterone imbalance in the early stage of menopause when the progesterone drops

Other issues related to low estrogen may not be as severe in women who are estrogen dominant as long as it is estriol and not estrone or estradiol

Estrogen also has a protective effect on the pancreas cells and lower estrogen can be a factor in insulin resistance



Estrogen Dominance And Menopause

Estrogen and progesterone help with fat burning

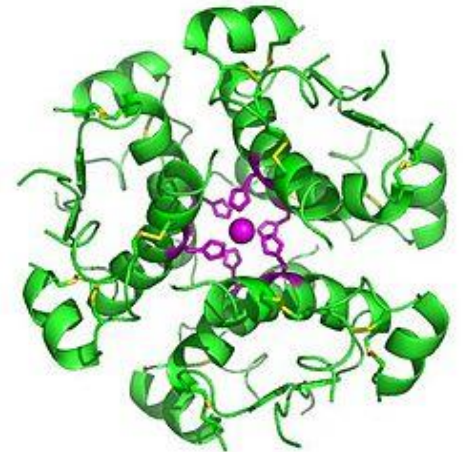
Estrogen makes cells more insulin sensitive and can help control the negative impact of cortisol

Progesterone opposes the action of estrogen with insulin – however, it and estrogen help with cortisol control

Insulin and cortisol are a bad combo for fat loss

Can women still be estrogen dominant in estradiol in or after menopause?

Yes – due to elevation in adrenal estrogen – from the development of a deficient, defective or bound cortisol that is being produced by the middle layer of the adrenal cortex – not an ovary thing



HRT

Synthetic estrogen and progesterone are prescribed by an MD usually to reduce hot flashes and other symptoms

Increases risk of breast cancer, heart disease, blood clots and strokes – side effects include water retention, headaches, nausea, phlebitis, breast tenderness and irritability

Create harmful by-products when metabolized by the liver (16- and 4-hydroxyestrone)

Bioidentical hormones are an option – long-term use not known and should only be considered for acute situations until hormones are balanced



Other Drugs

- Antidepressants are prescribed to help with hot flashes, depression, moods and anxiety – side effects include weight gain, nausea, dizziness and sexual issues
- Gabapentin – an anti-seizure med which is somewhat effective for hot flashes – side effects include drowsiness, dizziness and headaches
- Sleeping Pills – to help with sleep issues – long-term use creates dependency problems



Surgical Menopause

Hysterectomy or oophorectomy (ovaries removed) causes an abrupt end to reproductive hormone production

Cause for surgery is often an estrogen dominant condition such as endometriosis or fibroids

Adrenals are not necessarily ready to fulfill their post-menopause duties

Excess estrogen can be found in fat cells

Same players – insulin, stress, poor detoxification still need to be addressed

Bioidentical hormones can be helpful in short term



Solutions For Menopause Symptoms

- It's important to remember that menopause and menopausal symptoms don't necessarily go together
- Many women experience a smooth transition – with little or no symptoms
- Helping clients understand this will help motivate them to make changes
- Good food, lifestyle and supplement suggestions can make a big difference



Supplements

- Adrenal adaptagens – helpful for many symptoms, especially hot flashes
- Maca – especially good for vaginal dryness, libido, energy
- Schizandra – blood sugar stabilization, nervous system and liver support
- Omega 3 (fish, flax, chia) – counters pro-inflammatory PGE2 which helps with hot flashes, muscles aches, joint pains, and helps protect bones and heart



Supplements

- Vitex – still can help with balancing progesterone and estrogen
- Black Cohosh – some studies indicate that black cohosh may be helpful for hot flashes, but a meta-analysis study shows there is not enough evidence to support this
- Could be difference between standardized extract vs whole herb
- Vitamin C helps regulate PGE2; vitamin E can help with hot flashes, mood swings, anxiety and vaginal dryness; B vitamins help with liver detoxification and removing harmful estrogens



Supplements

- Thyroid support – the thyroid can become unstable during menopause so support is helpful
- Liver support – needed to protect the liver and aid detoxification (must contain milk thistle)
- Flavonoids – Hesperidin can help with hot flashes, quercetin helps with high histamine which has also been linked to hot flashes
- Probiotics – also aid detoxification, help with inflammation and supporting other systems



Study

A study from Lawson Health Research Institute found that good bacteria levels are reduced in the vaginal canal and may affect how vaginal tissue ages. This reduction is associated with:

- Vaginal dryness
- Pain during intercourse
- Inflammation of vaginal tissue

L. iners, L. crispatus, L. gasseri, L. jensenii, L. acidophilus, L. fermentum, L. plantarum, L. brevis, L. casei, L. vaginalis, L. delbrueckii, L. salivarius, L. reuteri, and L. rhamnosus



Prebiotic Study

In another study of healthy volunteers, waking cortisol levels were lowered and focus on positive information rather than negative information increased after taking prebiotics for 3 weeks

In particular it was GOS, not FOS or the placebo

GOS is high in yogurt and kefir which will also deliver probiotics

Probiotics have already demonstrated an ability to help with stress, depression and anxiety (which accompanies hot flashes)



Foods

- Phytoestrogens – extremely helpful for balancing the effects of low estrogen, helping prevent conversion of estrogen to harmful estrogen metabolites and aid detoxification
- Food form only – not supplements
- Liver foods
- Thyroid foods
- Balance blood sugar
- Fermented foods and prebiotics foods



Foods

- To cut down on supplements – try to support system with foods as much as possible
- Maca and schizandra are foods and can be used as such
- Sea vegetables and coconut oil can support the thyroid
- Liver-friendly foods can support the liver
- Kefir-grain kefir can be used like a probiotic supplement
- Menopause supplements are not as effective as supporting systems



Lifestyle

- Stress management is critical
- Exercise – moderate intensity aerobic exercise may be helpful for depression and sleep issues in sedentary women
- Yoga can also be helpful for stress reduction and adrenal support
- Psychospiritual work can also be helpful



Menopause

Is a time of transition

Some women embrace it as a time leading to new freedoms

Some women are filled with regret for what might have been

Some women feel a mix of both

This is an opportunity for clients to re-examine their lives and make plans to pursue new goals and dreams

They need to see it as a beginning and not an end



In Conclusion...

Menopause presents women with an amazing opportunity to re-evaluate what is working in their life and what isn't

If you can help their physical symptoms, it's easier for them to embrace their new life

Menopause issues are set in motion before menopause, but the body does respond well to support

Be sure to help the client understand what is happening and to stay the course until symptom solutions are found

