

# OPTIMAL HEALTH DURING MENOPAUSE

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## Outline

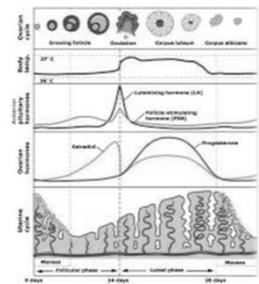
- Defining menopause
- Normal reproductive cycles
- Menopausal changes
- Symptoms of menopause
- Sources of estrogen during menopause
- Menopause cross culturally
- Factors that contribute to hormone imbalance
- Hormone replacement therapy
- What you can do about it
  - *Things to avoid*
  - *Diet and nutrition*
  - *Lifestyle*
  - *Naturopathic interventions*

## Nuts and Bolts of Menopause

- Menopause defined:
  - *Meno: month, menses*
  - *Pausis: pause or cessation*
    - The permanent cessation of menses following the loss of ovarian function
- Perimenopause
  - *Refers to the period immediately before menopause*
- Climacteric
  - *Refers to the transition from reproductive age to post reproductive period*

## The Players

- Follicle stimulating hormone (FSH)
- Luteinizing hormone (LH)
- Progesterone
- Estrogen
- Testosterone



## Changes with Menopause

- Levels fluctuate as menopause approaches
  - *FSH and LH levels rise*
  - *Progesterone decreases*
  - *Estrogen levels can vary*
    - Depends on adrenal status and body fat stores



## Symptoms of Menopause

- Estrogen deficiency
  - *Depression/anxiety*
    - Sleep disturbances
  - *Brain fog*
  - *Vaginal dryness*
  - *Vaginal atrophy*
    - Becomes troublesome several years after menopause
  - *Stress/urge incontinence*
- Estrogen excess
  - *Loss of libido*
  - *Depression*
  - *Fatigue*
  - *Fibrocystic breasts*
  - *Decreased concentration*
  - *Headaches*
  - *Irritability*
  - *Memory loss*
  - *Fluid retention*

## Hot Flashes

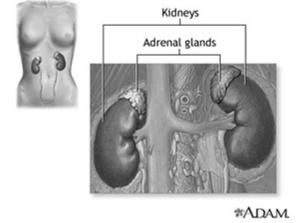
- Resetting of the body's thermostat – the hypothalamus
- Remember the rise in LH?
  - LH is secreted in bursts every 30-60 minutes or longer
  - Each hot flush begins as an LH spike



Kathy's hot flashes were becoming severe.

## Sources of Estrogen During Menopause

- The body still produces some estrogen
  - 20-30% of original levels
- Adrenal glands produce up to 40% of post menopausal estrogen
  - Directly in small amounts
  - Majority through the production of precursor 'androstenedione'
- Precursor converted to estrogen via enzyme located in body fat
  - Aromatase



## Menopause Cross Culturally

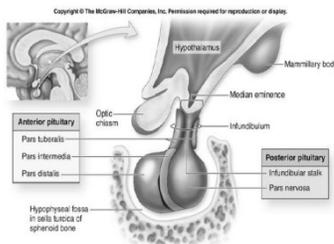


- Advanced age brings:
  - Divine blessing
  - Greater respect
  - Greater wisdom
- In traditional cultures:
  - No hot flashes
  - No vaginitis
  - No mood swings
  - Osteoporosis is rare
    - Despite identical hormone levels and bone density measurements

## Disrupting hormone balance

- Liver function
  - Converts estrone from adrenals and fat tissue into estradiol
  - Congestion leads to compromised detoxification pathways
    - Hormones not properly eliminated by the body.
      - 20% eliminated via bile and 80% eliminated via kidneys
      - Sluggish bowel function and harmful bacteria cause hormones to accumulate
- Adrenals are primary source of estrogen during menopause
  - Reduction of adrenal function caused by:
    - Chronic stress
    - Poor diet
    - Lack of sleep
    - Excessive coffee consumption
      - Prolongs the body's response to stress
      - Continual stimulation leads to exhaustion

## Disrupting hormone balance



## Disrupting hormone balance

- Remember LH?
  - Secretion is regulated by the hypothalamus
  - Hypothalamus secretes GRH to stimulate LH
- GRH is modulated by several neurotransmitters
  - Any disruption to these may cause LH levels to rise
  - This disturbance is magnified by stress ....
- Hypothalamus aggravated by inflammatory compounds found in the diet

## Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)

- Used since the 40's and 50's to relieve symptoms of menopause
  - *Estrogen only*
    - Increased risk of endometrial and breast cancers
  - *Estrogen and progesterone (progestin)*
    - Reduced risk of endometrial cancers
    - Increased risk of breast cancer
  - *Progesterone only*
    - Staves off bones loss (osteopenia/porosis) associated with menopause

## Side effects of OCP/HRT

- Increased risk of gall stones
- Increased risk of blood clots
- Nausea
- Breast tenderness
- PMS
- Depression
- Liver dysfunction
- Increased size of uterine fibroids
- Fluid retention
- Blood sugar disturbances
- Headaches

## Hormone support: Naturally

- Benefits of HRT are undeniable
- Identical benefits can be achieved through:
  - *Diet*
  - *Exercise*
  - *Lifestyle*
- Short term use (<6months) can be helpful while transitioning
  - *Bio identical Hormone Replacement*
- Long term use not justified in most women
  - *Risks outweigh the benefits*
- Exception are those suffering from severe osteoporosis
  - *Bio Identical Hormone Replacement*

## So...What To Do?

- Avoid factors known to aggravate menopausal symptoms
  - *Physical inactivity*
  - *Exhaustion*
  - *Stress and overwork*
  - *Inability to relax*
  - *Hot drinks*
  - *Spicy foods*



## So...What To Do?

- Avoid foods containing histamine
  - *Cheese and red wine*
  - *(fermented foods)*
- Avoid chocolate
- Avoid caffeine
- Do not smoke
- Avoid commercial red meat, dairy, peanuts, and shellfish
- Do your best to avoid extreme temperatures



## Specifics: Supporting Adrenals

- Get regular sleep
- Follow a regular eating schedule
  - *Eat breakfast*
- Maintain healthy blood sugar balance
  - *Follow a whole foods diet*
    - 50% colorful veggies
    - Clean and lean proteins
    - No refined foods
- Manage your stress effectively
  - *Tactile breathing*
  - *Good communication*
  - *Healthy boundaries – be mindful of 'psychic vampires'*
- Fun and laughter
- Time with good friends
- Exercise regularly
  - *Caution: overtraining*
    - Pay attention to body fat.
    - 12% considered essential for hormone production

## Specifics: Supporting Liver Health

- Consume dark leafy greens
- Lemon water in am
- Castor oil packs
- Turmeric/Milk Thistle
- Probiotics
- High fiber
- Limit exposure to exogenous chemicals
  - Plastics
  - Fragrances
  - Commercial foods



## Naturopathic interventions

- Prevention, prevention, prevention
- Take responsibility for your health
  - Ask questions
  - Educate yourself
  - Share your knowledge
- Supervised naturopathic care can provide
  - Botanical support
  - Nutritional support
  - Stress management
  - Advice on detoxing
  - Correcting hormonal imbalances



## The Best Is Yet to Come....



"I feel there is something unexplored about woman that only a woman can explore."

~ Georgia O'Keeffe