



Menopause

A Natural Transition



Life as a woman unfolds through several biological stages. The variations on how these are experienced are as diverse as life itself. Whether considering birth, infancy, childhood, puberty, adolescence, reproductive maturity or menopause, each is a natural part of being alive. At the same time, any woman who is having an incredibly difficult time going through the stages of menopause will most likely say that it certainly doesn't feel natural.

And so it begins

Several years before menopause, a woman enters an interval known as perimenopause, when changes start to occur in hormone production.

Inside every woman's body are at least fifty different hormones. These chemical messengers circulate in the bloodstream, controlling the starting, stopping, speeding up or slowing down of functions and processes in organs and body systems such as the reproductive system.

During perimenopause, estrogen and progesterone levels begin to fall and fluctuate. This hormonal change is a natural part of the transition. However, the resulting imbalance can begin to trigger a number of symptoms associated with menopause, including depression, hot flashes, night sweats, mood changes, insomnia, water retention and weight gain. Although irregular menstrual cycles can also occur, pregnancy is still possible during the perimenopausal years.

Menopause and Hormonal Imbalance

The ovaries produce estrogen and progesterone, the primary hormones involved in reproduction. A balanced ratio of these hormones is required for the optimal functioning of the reproductive system, including the menstrual cycle and fertility.

A woman is born with a lifetime reserve of around two million eggs that are stored in the ovarian follicles. Over time, the ovaries begin to reduce in size. As the number of follicles declines during the aging process, follicle-stimulating and luteinizing hormones are unable to regulate estrogen and progesterone levels, which control the menstrual cycle.

When a woman misses her period for twelve consecutive months, she has officially entered menopause. Her ovaries no longer release eggs and stop most of their estrogen and progesterone production.

This gradual transition that signals an end to the reproductive years typically starts when a woman is in her forties or fifties. However, menopause can begin at an earlier or much later age.

The body of each woman is different, so the effects of the physiological changes during menopause are not the same for every woman. Some women experience a varying number of uncomfortable symptoms while others experience the transition with little or no discomfort.

Menopausal symptoms result when levels of estrogen are higher than progesterone, creating a hormonal imbalance. One factor that contributes to "estrogen dominance" is the prevalence of endocrine-disrupting chemicals called xenoestrogens, which may be found in animal, dairy and skin-care products, herbicides and pesticides, plastics, etc. To restore the balance, it may be helpful to use natural progesterone cream.

Completing the Transition

The final stage of the transition is referred to as postmenopause. Unpleasant symptoms may ease off at this point in time. Simultaneously, because of lower than normal levels of estrogen, the postmenopausal period can increase the risk of developing health problems, including urinary incontinence, osteoporosis and cardiovascular issues.

Still, the fact is that good health can be maintained right from the start, leading to a smooth transition through menopause and a new beginning.

Natural Remedies

First and foremost, embracing this inevitable stage of life with a positive attitude is a healthy way of adjusting. Rather than viewing menopause as an ending to youthfulness and fertility, accepting it as a new life chapter puts an entirely different read on the situation.

Lifestyle changes that include a primarily plant-based (anti-inflammatory) diet, regular exercise, plenty of rest and relaxation will go a long way in making a smooth transition through menopause.

Natural health products that provide supplemental nutrients to help the body adjust to the transition can also be beneficial in avoiding menopausal symptoms.

