

Menopause

A Collective Perspective

*the following are the proceedings/summary
handouts of the
Vancouver Women's Health Collective's
forum celebrating
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MENOPAUSE QUIZ-- just for fun!

presenter
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Fill in the blanks or circle the correct answer(s).

1. Menopause is:
2. What is the age range for normal menopause? to years old
3. What is the average age of menopause?
45, 48, 52, 55, 58
4. "Hot flushes" or hot flashes": a. are experienced by all menopausal women, b. often begin before periods stop, c. indicate anger at loss of youth and femininity, d. continue for only a few months, e. are imaginary, f. all of the answers are correct.
5. "Hot flushes" or hot flashes" are caused by: a. anxiety, b. sleep disturbances c. abnormal thyroid hormones, d. surges of hypothalamic hormones, e. frustration, f. all of the previous reasons.
6. "Hot flushes" or hot flashes" are well treated by: a. tranquilizers, b. sleeping pills, c. estrogen medication, d. ginseng, e. progesterone medication, f. acetaminophen, or g. all listed treatments are effective.
7. Osteoporosis caused by: a. menopause, b. being overweight, c. amenorrhea (lack of periods for at least 6 months) as a young adult, d. marijuana, e. lack of regular ovulation in adulthood, f. drinking too little orange juice all your life.
8. I believe that:
 - a. Menopause is a disease that must be treated.
 - b. Some women will require estrogen and progesterone treatment for menopausal symptoms or because bone density is low.
 - c. Most women will develop weak bones and fractures if they don't take estrogen.
 - d. Women will be more prone to heart attacks if they don't take estrogen
 - e. Vaginal dryness interfering with sex will develop if women don't take estrogen.

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9. My major concern about menopause is:

10. Research about menopause needs to answer the following questions:

*I am years old, and a. am years since my last period or b. still having menstrual cycles. I am treated with a. Premarin, b. Premarin and Provera, c. other. I now have hot flushes Y N. They trouble me (minimally) 0, 1, 2, 3, 4 (a lot).

Instructions for the Daily Menopause Diary

This form (located in Appendix B) will help you become aware of the way your body responds to the menopausal changes in your life and to any treatments. Although this form is mostly self-explanatory, I have provided additional information so your record-keeping can best help you (and your physician, if you choose to share it). Please take a minute before you go to bed each night to record the information about your day. The scale at the top goes from 0 to 4; zero represents something you did not experience and four represents the worst it has ever been for you. The scale at the bottom uses letters to indicate if feelings or body symptoms go up or down from your usual '(U)' or normal state. Please start filling in the form at the start of a new calendar month, or on the right day of the month.

Menstrual Flow

You are requested to evaluate the amount of your flow on that day. Use the number scale 0 - 4 provided on your Diary Form to indicate the intensity of flow. A '1' would be spotting and '4' is changing pads or tampons every 2 hours or having clots. If you have no flow or no longer have your uterus, ignore this line.

Breast Tenderness:

You are being asked to note both front and/or side breast soreness. Below is a diagram of the general areas of your breast that you should touch firmly with the palm of your hand to determine if you have breast tenderness there. There may be very little soreness, but the pressure will feel different, for example, from the same pressure on your leg.

Fluid Retention:

This means feeling bloated or puffy, with water weight gain and getting up to urinate at night.

Hot Flashes

Record the **actual number** of hot flushes you experience in the rows labeled "# Flushes Night". Please record the **intensity** of or how strong the hot flush was in the other box using the 0 - 4 scale above. A '1' would be a feeling of slight heat, and a '4' would be dripping wet all over.

Stress and Feelings

You are asked to record how you **feel** each day and to evaluate the amount of stress that is part of your life. These two things are not the same. Record feelings on the numbered scale and outside stresses on the bottom scale (with letters). For example, on a given day you may not feel anxious. At the same time you may judge the stresses in your life to be a little more than usual because of a work deadline you had to meet.

Please write your comments at the bottom of the column. This may include any particular event which influenced how you felt that day (for example, report if you are ill, have a job promotion, win a major prize, have an argument with your partner, etc.). Additional comments or explanations may be noted on the back of the form.

Treatment

Please write down the therapy you are taking under Treatments. Mark off each day you are taking the treatment(s) by putting an X in the square for that day, for example:

Treatments: Provera 10 mg, days 16-25

Premarin 0.3 mg, days 1-25

This form is designed to help you better understand the changes you are experiencing. Though data-gathering like this, a large body of information will accumulate so our daughters will be more prepared than we were for their "menopausal years."

MENOPAUSE FACTS: PATIENT INFORMATION

presenter
DR. SUZANNE MONTEMURO

A summary of Information Obtained at the North American Menopause Society Meetings.

Menopause refers to that period in a woman's life when the ovaries gradually stop producing the hormones Estrogen and Progesterone. This process takes many years and is unique for each woman.

The years which precede Menopause (the final menstruation) are often referred to as the Transition. The Transition can start anywhere from the mid 30's to early 40's. It is often a time of increased PMS, irregular menstrual bleeding, fluctuating moods, and sometimes migraines, nightsweats and hot flushes. The cause of these symptoms are the widely fluctuating amounts of Estrogen and Progesterone that the falling ovaries produce. At times these hormone levels, which can be measured in a blood test, are too low and at other times they are much too high. Women can often feel "not quite right" as the internal milieu of their bodies changes dramatically from month to month.

Menopause follows the transition. At about age 50, natural menstruation stops. The symptoms which many women notice at this time are hot flushes, night sweats, insomnia, vaginal dryness, memory changes, muscular and joint aches and a lack of interest in sex. Symptoms vary in each individual woman. They may last from a few months to many years. In some women Menopause occurs suddenly because their ovaries, which produce Estrogen and Progesterone, are surgically removed. These women experience sudden, severe menopause symptoms.

The Post-Menopausal Years follow. In the early 1900's the average life expectancy for women was approximately 50 to 60 years. Many people were considered 'old' by the time they were in their late 40's and early 50's. This meant that many women experienced the Post-Menopausal Years for a relative short time. Today, in Western Society, a woman can expect to live an average of 80+ years. She can expect to have 30-40 Post-Menopausal Years. Research and new information about this period is being assessed with the view to finding ways to make the quality of women's lives better than it has been in the past. The North American Menopause Society is a multi-disciplinary body that promotes both research and education in this rapidly expanding field.

What advice do I have for women entering this challenging passage? Preparing for menopause long before it occurs is of great importance. A diet that has adequate calcium (800-1000mg per day) and vitamin D, will enable women to build strong bones during the reproductive years when Estrogen is still available to promote bone growth. Including plenty of vegetables, fiber, and fruits in your diet, in addition to limiting saturated (animal) fats, helps prevent heart disease and cancers, particularly colon, breast and uterine.

Smoking should be stopped because it causes osteoporosis, cancer and heart disease. A regular program of weight-bearing exercise builds bone and prevents heart disease. Exercise is also good psychologically.

Transition symptoms of irritability, mood swing and PMS can be alleviated using vitamins and herbs (B6 @ 100 mg per day, Primrose Oil @ 3-6 caps per day or Primal @ 2-4 caps per day). Excessive bleeding and hot flushes can be extremely bothersome. Herbs like Dong Quai (2-12 tabs per day) or hormones like Provera or the new Mature-women's oral contraceptives can control these symptoms while they last. Remember that the internal milieu is continuing to change, so none of these remedies need be used for very long. They serve only to help women overcome some specific symptoms while the body continues its progress towards menopause.

Once menopause occurs, some women experience an increase in hot flushes, depression, and vaginal dryness. If these symptoms are mild, one could use herbs like Dong Quai and Ginseng (2-6 caps per day) or Vitamin E (400-800 IU. per day). If symptoms are severe and interfering with sleep and normal daily activities, then Hormone Replacement should be tried. I recommend a short trial of Estrogen for about three weeks to see whether it helps. If it relieves symptoms and increases a person's sense of well-being then it should be continued. How long to use Estrogen is a question everyone asks. Each person must be individually assessed. If Estrogen relieves the acute symptoms of menopause, then it can be used to gently ease a woman through this period, and perhaps for one to two years, then gradually reducing the dose. Some women prefer to remain on Estrogen and this is a choice they are free to make. Using Estrogen in this way is both safe and effective.

Long Term Studies have been carried out on the use of post-menopausal estrogen. Premarin .625 or 3 has been shown to be safe in 20 year studies. Other types of Estrogen (the Patch, Ogen, Esterase etc.) are also being investigated. If the dose of Estrogen is too high (i.e. Premarin 1.25) then long term therapy results in a slight increase in the incidence of Breast Cancer. It therefore makes sense to keep the dose low. Progesterone (Provera) must be also added to Estrogen Therapy in women who have a Uterus. This hormone can be taken on a cyclic basis (10-12 days per month) which will result in monthly shedding of the Uterus lining (a Withdrawal Bleed). Sometimes Provera is taken intermittently (i.e. every 2-3 months). This will result in a Withdrawal Bleed only when the Provera is taken. Other women take a very small amount of Provera on a continuous basis along with Estrogen. When taken in this way Withdrawal Bleeding is very light and gradually stops altogether. Individual preference helps choose between these various methods.

Regular Medical Checkups are an essential part of post-menopausal preventative health. Breast Self Examination as well as Mammograms are important. Pelvic exams should continue and abnormal vaginal bleeding should not be overlooked.

Long term use of Hormone Replacement is a new prospect for the future. If a woman is at high risk of, or suffers from Osteoporosis or Heart Disease, she may be wise to consider this option. The major cause of death after menopause is Heart Disease. Estrogen deficiency has now been shown to play a role in the development of post-menopausal Heart Disease and Estrogen replacement has been shown to prevent this. Cardiologists are now considering Estrogen as a Heart Disease Medication for women.

Osteoporosis refers to the gradual loss of calcium from bone after menopause. This results in easily broken bones especially in the wrist, back and hip bones. Women who have an early menopause are at particular risk, as are those who smoke, have a diet inadequate in Calcium, drink excessive coffee/alcohol and rarely exercise. A family History of Osteoporosis is significant. Thyroid Disease and Cortisone Therapy increase the risk of brittle bones. Estrogen both prevents Osteoporosis in early menopause and treats Osteoporosis in later years. Estrogen can increase the strength of weak bones. It is important to consider this option if a woman's Osteoporosis risk is high or if she already has Osteoporosis. One can determine the strength or weakness of bones by doing a Bone Density Study.

The women going through "The Change" today are taking a much different approach than their Mother's. They are talking about menopause like they never did before. They are sharing their experiences with each other and gaining strength and enlightenment from doing so. They realize that with every "Change" in their lives comes first, a sense of "loss" which is later replaced by a sense of "re-birth" as a new stage in life begins. The post-menopausal years are likely to be the very best years for many women today. With the experience and wisdom of their years and good health and more personal freedom, mature women stand to make significant contributions to their own lives and to those around them.

THERAPY FOR MENOPAUSAL SYMPTOMS

HORMONAL THERAPY:

TRANSITIONAL SYMPTOMS:

PMS-Provera 5 mg (day 15 to 25 of cycle)

IRREGULAR MENSES-Provera"

**HOT FLUSHES, IRRITABILITY, IRREGULAR MENSES- Marvelon,
Cyclen, Ortho-cept**

DYSMENORRHEA-Marvelon, Cyclen, Ortho-cept Anti-prostaglandins

POST MENOPAUSE:

VAGINAL DRYNESS-Estrogen Cream (Premarin, Dienestrol

HOT FLUSHES-Estrogen: Premarin (3, 625, .9, 1.25 mg)

Ogen (1.5, 3 mg) Esterase (1.2 mg), Estraderm Patch (25, 50, 100 mcg),
Climacterone Inj. (1 c.c. per month)

HORMONAL THERAPY REGIMES:

FOR WOMEN WITHOUT A UTERUS: Daily Estrogen at Lowest dose to prevent symptoms

FOR WOMEN WITH A UTERUS:

If she wants a regular menses - Daily Estrogen and Monthly Sequential Provera (5 mg for 12 days per month)

If she wants a menses every 2-3 months- (Daily Estrogen and Q2-3 mon Provera)

If she does not want a menses-Daily Estrogen and Daily or Alternate Day Provera (2.5mg)

MENOPAUSE ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS

presenter
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The most creative force in the world is the menopausal woman with zest.
— Margaret Mead

Menopause is a transition period of five to seven years marking the end of a woman's reproductive years. Often women transit this passage with ease. For those of you who do have signs of menopausal discomfort, this paper is to inform you of some of the available natural alternatives

In our society, older women are often devalued and menopause is commonly seen as the beginning of an estrogen deficient disease that needs to be treated with hormone replacement therapy. In many cultures, women have few of the characteristics that we associate with menopause and they view it as a positive event that provides them with respect as elders, as well as a relief from the childbearing years. If we viewed menopause in a positive light, to what extent might our experience of menopause change? The treatments I have outlined in this paper are those which have proven successful in my clinical practice. I strongly urge you to work with an experienced clinician who will assess your individual menopausal needs and prescribe accordingly.

LIFESTYLE

Diet

A healthy diet will decrease the general stress load on your body and will increase your sense of well being. Specific to menopausal discomfort, a healthy diet will reduce the intensity and frequency of hot flashes and will decrease the risk of heart disease and osteoporosis.

1. High in

- A. Grains
 - whole
 - varied
 - low in white, refined flours

- B. Vegetables
 - 30% of total food consumption
- Fruit
 - 10% of total food consumption
 - Use organic if possible

- C. Protein - moderate intake, 60-100 grams a day consisting of soy, beans, nuts, dairy, wild fish and free range poultry.
- D. Calcium rich foods - dark, leafy vegetables, sesame and sunflower seeds, tofu made with calcium sulphate.
- E. Soy products - one cup of soy beans provides approximately 300 mgs of isoflavones which is equal to .45 mg. of conjugate estrogen.

2. Low in

- A. Fat - all kinds to decrease the risk of cardiovascular disease. Cold pressed, non-saturated fats are best.
- B. Sugar - high sugared diets (including honey, maple syrup etc.) decreases general health and has been shown to increase the number of hot flashes.
 - increases urinary calcium
 - damages the heart muscle
 - increases weight gain and promotes low blood sugar, hypoglycemia, which tends to increase at this time of life. To minimize symptoms keep sugar and refined carbohydrates to an absolute minimum and distribute caloric intake over six small meals a day.

3. Sugar, alcohol, hot drinks, caffeine, spicy foods, MSG, and smoking increase the number of hot flashes.

4. Salt, caffeine and high protein all increase urinary calcium. We need to keep calcium in the blood to have it available for the bones. This mineral is used as a buffering substance in the blood and combines with certain substances (see above) to neutralize their acidity. The buffered substance is then urinated out.

Exercise

While an improved diet is a good start there are many benefits to be gained from the complement of an ongoing exercise program.

- a mild to moderate muscle toning program will keep the muscles firm, toned and will keep the heart muscle healthy.
- there will be increased endorphins, the bodies natural opiates which will increase your sense of well being.
- the bones need to have the messages that they are needed. "Use them or lose them."

Frequency - for an aerobic effect to be created the exercise program needs to be done for twenty to forty-five minutes at least every other day.

Type - jogging, stairmaster, for 20 minutes or a brisk walk for 45 minutes.

Stress Reduction

A reduced stress load is generally necessary for a healthy person, and conscious daily stress reduction is essential to the menopausal woman. A recent study has shown that hot flashes decreased by 40% using a stress reduction technique for 15 minutes twice a day.

- Techniques
- tapes that guide you through a technique
 - breath work
 - meditation
 - autogenic training and progressive relaxation
 - For an ongoing effect, I recommend at least 20 minutes a day.

Education and support

1. Read up on the subject (attached is a book list)
2. Friends - share your experiences with other women
3. Join a menopausal support group or start one yourself. Phone some other women friends, find a place, locate the books or book list and presto, a support group. (Janine Cobb *Understanding Menopause* has a good section on how to start a group, pages 180-182).
4. If you are having a difficult time with this transition and feel you need more guidance seek help from an experienced counselor.

Pre-menopausal Women

To prepare for menopause, put into effect all the suggestions in the lifestyle section. A healthier body will have an easier passage and fewer symptoms.

THERAPIES

Supplements

These vary in strength, form and bioavailability . Search out a source you can trust.

A. Multivitamins and mineral tablets

Use daily. In times of higher stress we use our vitamins at an increased rate. Our daily needs are higher than we receive from food. Also the complete range of minerals, not just calcium, are needed to replenish the bone minerals that are lost at this age.

B. Essential Fatty Acids (EFA)

Omega 3, 6, and 9 and GLA are forms of EFA that are very helpful in all gynecological complaints. One theory states that the fluctuation of prostaglandins is one of the causes of increased menopausal symptoms. EFA's help regulate the prostaglandins. Good sources of EFA are flaxseed oil (4-1000 mg. caps a day), borage oil (3-500 mg. caps a day), and evening primrose oil (3 pills a day).

C. Vitamin E

1. enhances the estrogen we have in our body and dramatically reduces the frequency and intensity of hot flashes.
2. decreases risk of cardiovascular disease.
3. increases high density lipoproteins, the good kind of fat cells.

Dosage - 1200-1600 I.U. for three months then reduce to 400 I.U. per day. Over 800 I.U. a day for a prolonged period of time may be toxic. Use a natural form. Vitamin E is contraindicated in people with a history of breast cancer due to the estrogenic effect.

D. Calcium - see discussion in the section on osteoporosis.

E. Vitamin C

Vitamin C is a collagen precursor which is one of the building blocks of our skin, ligaments and blood vessels. Dosage 100-1500 mg. of ascorbic acid two times a day.

F. Liver Cleanse

The liver changes one form of estrogen (Estradiol) to a more usable form of estrogen (Estriol). This function is especially important to optimize the small amount of estrogen we have left in our body. Cleansing will remove the backlog of toxins we've accumulated through our foods and environment, thus allowing this organ to function properly.

Homeopathy

Homeopathic medicine is a natural pharmaceutical science that uses very small doses of substances from the plant, animal and mineral domains to stimulate the body's own healing mechanisms. A homeopathic medicine will create in a well person what it will cure in a symptomatic person. It works on rebalancing the body's constitution to increase our vital force and thereby increase our immune system.

Listed below are some of the major symptoms for the more common menopausal remedies. Trained physicians can help you choose the correct remedy quickly and safely.

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| Sepia | Irritable, overwhelmed, depressed and indifference to loved ones.
Flushes of heat with perspiration. Worsening at night. Aversion to sex. |
| Lachesis | Sweating with flushing. Headaches on the top of the scalp. All symptoms are worse in the morning, after sleeping, and there is a typical peculiar combination of talkativeness and an intolerance of any form of constricting pressure on the body, e.g. tight clothing. |
| Pulsatilla | Weepy, indecisive. Variable symptoms of flushing, worse from heat, May have hot face and chilly body. Desires company and consolation. |
| Belladonna | Restlessness and agitation and a red, burning face, often with palpitations and great intolerance to pressure, touch or any sudden jarring. |

Crotalus Flushed, bluish face with congestion, there is an associated headache, and a tendency to bleeding, either nose bleeds or heavy uterine loss. Symptoms are worse after sleep. Restlessness, anxiousness and weakness are often present.

Other remedies are - Sulphur, Graphites, Psorinum, Manganum.

Note. Sometimes a general constitutional work-up needs to be completed and a remedy is given for the whole person which will help the menopausal symptoms.

Botanical Medicine

Many forms of herbs have been used all over the world in many cultures. I have chosen only a few of the many available. Various forms may be used - dried, tinctures, creams or tablets. Strength and freshness varies greatly. An experienced practitioner can work up a formula that will suit your individual needs.

Ginseng Has many forms - Siberian or Red Korean are often used. Strengthens and tones the adrenal glands which helps the conversion of androgens to estrogens and reduces the effects of stress. Increases the metabolism which acts to increase general energy. The steroidal glycosides are estrogen precursors.

Glycyrrhiza Licorice root, a phytoestrogen, decreases the menopausal symptoms without increasing the amount of estrogen in the blood, thereby reducing the risk of cancer. Also has a progesterone effect.

Don Quai A phytoestrogen that helps reduce hot flashes and regulate menses. Used for hundreds of years in China, it is said that this herb will replace what has been lost in the menstrual blood. It also helps to stabilize blood vessels.

Dioscorea Wild Yam, contains progesterone precursors diosgenin and pregnenolone. A pharmaceutical grade oral micronized progesterone is manufactured by a Vancouver pharmacy.

Viburnum Opulus, Crampbark Is an anti-spasmodic which decreases cramping, pain, hot flashes and high blood pressure.

Cimicifuga Racemosa, Black Cohosh A phytoestrogen which decreases hot flashes, headaches, water retention and fatigue. It also tones and strengthens uterine and bladder muscles.

Other phytoestrogens - *Foeniculum Vulgare* (fennel), *Arctium Lappa* (burdock), *Salvia Officinalis* (garden sage). Other progesterone precursors - *Vitex Agnus-Castus* (chaste tree), *Smilax Officinalis* (sarsaparilla).

Natural Estrogen and Progesterone.

There is an Estroil creme and tablet (made from soybeans and wild yams) and an oral micronized progesterone (made from Dioscorea - wild yams) available through a pharmacy in Vancouver. This form of estrogen (Estriol) does not promote cancer and is safe for those who have a history of breast cancer.

OSTEOPOROSIS

Thinning of the bone minerals begins at age thirty five and then accelerates rapidly for eight to ten years around the time of menopause. Thereafter, bone loss continues at a slower rate. A small amount of bone loss is normal, yet 25% of all Canadian women will suffer too much bone loss, resulting in porous bones or osteoporosis. The best treatment for this condition is prevention. Osteoporosis is virtually unknown in countries where women do much physical work and eat a simple, low protein diet.

Risk factors:

1. Age - increased risk over forty
2. Heritage - higher in Anglo-Saxon or Nordic. Less in Afro-American, because their bones are more dense
3. Bones - decreased if large bones
4. Hereditary - increased if osteoporosis is in the family
5. Height - decreased if taller
6. Menses - increased if menses stopped before forty
7. Variables - decreased if taking a calcium supplement
- increased if diet is high in protein, caffeine, alcohol and tobacco.

Diet - See previous section

Exercise - see previous section. Make sure the exercise is weight bearing. Swimming and stationary weight training are not.

Stress It has been documented that high stress increases bone loss. See previous section for suggestions.

Supplements Multivitamin and mineral - we need the full range of minerals to keep our bones strong. See the previous section.

Calcium To be fully absorbed calcium needs magnesium, vitamin D, strong stomach acid and a good bioavailable source. Calcium citrate and calcium citramate are good absorbable forms of this mineral. Tums, as a source of calcium, neutralizes the stomach acid needed for calcium absorption. Dosage depends on the form of calcium used. Calcium is very important for strong bones. However, skeletal calcium depletion is present in only 25% of osteoporotic women. Many other nutrients are important.

Magnesium Is necessary to promote normal bone mineralization and is necessary for the ingestion of vitamin D.

Silicon, Manganese, Vitamin C, Vitamin B6 Are essential for the proper formation of cartilage and other organic components of bone.

Vitamin D Is necessary for the absorption of calcium in the body.

Vitamin K. Attracts calcium to the bones.

Zinc and Copper Are involved in the bone repair mechanism.

Boron Reduces urinary calcium output and helps to increase blood concentrations of estrogen.

Natural Estrogen and Progesterone These two hormones may also be necessary to help reverse bone loss.

HEART DISEASE

A high percentage of heart disease can be prevented by a healthy lifestyle. In addition, supplements, botanical medicines and homeopathy can restore proper blood supply to the heart and enhance the energy production within the heart. The major risk factors for heart disease are:

- high cholesterol - leading cause of heart disease
- high blood pressure
- physical inactivity
- adult onset diabetes.

Diet

Low in:

- Fat - all fats, especially saturated fat. Total intake 25% or less
- Sugars - decrease the strength of the heart muscle.
- Caffeine - a potent vasoconstrictor which reduces the flow of nutrients and oxygen to the heart.
- Alcohol - causes deterioration of the heart muscle.

High in:

- Fibre - helps lower cholesterol, e.g. vegetables, oat bran, flax seeds, whole grains
- Onions/garlic - lower blood lipids and blood pressure.

See other suggestions in the general menopausal section.

Exercise

1. The heart is a muscle that pumps 5000 gallons of blood per day and it needs 30-45 minutes of aerobic activity every other day to keep it toned and healthy.

2. Emotional exercise - risk of heart disease increases 3 times if you are lonely and isolated. Make sure you have a good network for love and support.

Stress Highly stressed individuals have two times the risk of heart disease. Stress reduction techniques are mentioned earlier in this article.

Smoking Nicotine is one of the most potent vasoconstrictor known. Search out ways to decrease your smoking.

Decrease high blood pressure This can be done by changing your diet, using relaxation techniques and exercise.

Supplements for high blood pressure

calcium and magnesium - relaxes the arteries and the veins

garlic - decreases lipids in the blood

vitamin C - strengthens collagen, thereby strengthening the walls of the blood vessels

Supplements

Multivitamin and minerals for general heart health.

Essential fatty acids, e.g. flax seed oil, borage or evening primrose oil can inhibit platelet aggregation and is a natural anti-inflammatory.

Vitamin E Recent study of the American Heart Association shows that women who took 400-800 I.U. of vitamin E had a 36% lower risk of heart disease. It is powerful antioxidant, decreases free radical damage of the heart wall and increases the function of the nerves and muscle.

Lecithin Increases the solubility of cholesterol.

Vitamin C Necessary to produce collagen. A natural antioxidant that reduces free radical damage.

Niacin Decreases cholesterol levels. The form of inositol hexaniacinate is recommended to reduce the niacin flush.

Carnitine and Pantethine Increases the breakdown of food stuffs into a form of energy the heart needs to function. Also increases vasodilation and thus the nutrients to the heart.

Coenzyme Q 10 Is an essential component of the energy cells (the mitochondria) of the heart where it plays a major role in energy production.

Crataegus (hawthorn) A botanical plant which opens the coronary vessels by relaxing the vascular smooth muscle. It also increases the metabolic processes in the heart in the feeding the heart. A wonderful heart toner.

HOT FLASHES

Keep cool, dress in layers, drink cool water and reduce stimulants. Mild flashes may be enjoyable. Some women call them power surges!

VAGINAL THINNING AND DRYNESS

Use vitamin E directly on the vaginal wall. Make sure you are drinking enough liquid and wear cotton underpants. Cocoa butter or natural estrogen creme may also be used.

INSOMNIA

Exercise often and use a relaxation tape before bed. Calcium, a natural muscle relaxant can be taken before bedtime. Use botanical plants (valerian, passiflora, or hops) or homeopathic remedies (coffea, nux vomica, chamomilla).

In a recent survey 62% of post-menopausal women (average age 58) found the statement "this is the best age to be", to be personally true for them. This tells us most women reach a new plateau of contentment after menopause. (Janine Cobb).

GREEN ALLIES HERBAL SUPPORT FOR MENOPAUSE

presenter
PAULA SKALNEK
Herbalist

Each of us is unique. Each remedy will have variables. When questions arise, consult a well trained practitioner, and, most of all, listen to your body.

Chaste tree - *Vitex agnus-castil*

Considered by many to be 'the herb' for menopausal women, regardless of whether she achieves it naturally or through drugs, radiation or surgery. Vitex is a hormone regulator. It nourishes the pituitary gland, our master gland, effecting the balance of FSH and LH production and secretion. Vitex supports the production and secretion of progesterone. This is particularly helpful for women experiencing polymenorrhea (frequent menses). It protects against osteoporosis and vaginal dryness. Vitex is subtle. It is slow acting tonic. You generally see results after 2-3 months of daily use.

Black Cohosh - *Cimicifuga racemosa*

Used a great deal by North American Indians for its normalizing effect on the female sex hormones. Contains substances with estrogenic actions. It regulates the menstrual cycle, soothing irritation and moving congestion from the uterus. Helpful to those whose menses are scanty & or irregular. This herb is also a smooth muscle and nerve relaxant. It has an anti-inflammatory action and is used in the treatment of people with rheumatoid and osteo-arthritis. Black Cohosh is safe herb with no known side effects.

False Unicorn Root - *Chamaelirium luteum*

One of the best tonifying herbs for the reproductive system. Contains estrogen precursors but is considered amphoteric (uses the body's wisdom to change or adapt depending on the condition). False Unicorn Root is an emmenagogue (stimulates and promotes normal menstrual function) thus its usefulness in delayed menstruation. Contraindicated for those experiencing metorrhagia (too much bleeding) and for those people taking corticosteroids.

Dong Quai - *Angelica sinensis*

One of the most honored herbs in China today. Reputed blood nourisher. It is considered a menstrual tonic, balancing amenorrhea (absence of menses) or metorrhagia (too much menstruation). In menopause, it reduces spotting and flooding. Dong Quai relaxes smooth muscles and has analgesic properties. It relieves aches and spasms in the uterus and vagina. It's warming to the pelvic region and increases circulation to the area. This moistens not only the bowels but increases vaginal lubrication. "most useful in the treatment of disorders of menstruation, menopause (especially hot flashes), atopic conditions, smooth muscle spasm (e.g., uterine cramps, migraines, and abdominal spasm)"

— M. Murray

Ginseng - *Panax ginseng*

Ginseng is referred to as an adaptogenic, meaning it improves the body's ability to adapt to a wide range of stresses. It improves your stamina. It increases resistance and improves one's physical and mental performance. As estrogen levels decrease in the ovaries it becomes more important to support the adrenal glands because they also produce a form of estrogen.

Chew the root itself. Drink a decoction: 30 grams of finely chopped dried root simmered in a glass pan for 10 minutes in 250ml. of water.

Contraindicated in causes where anxiety and nervous tension have led to exhaustion.

During your reproductive years Ginseng should not be used unless your ovarian/menstrual cycle is fully stable. Also not recommended for those suffering from cardiovascular disease.

Contraindicated in hyper-thyroid, hypercortical conditions and for those taking steroidal medication.

Liquorice - *Glycyrrhiza glabra*

Information about this herb could fill libraries. It is one of the most used herbs in the world, especially in China. It has a reputation as an adrenal tonic but it would be more correct to say adrenal agent as Liquorice contains natural precursors (hormone building blocks) of the adrenal hormones. These help restore the adrenal glands to their natural function. For those people feeling overstretched, overexposed to stress in their lives consider Liquorice. Chew a stick of Liquorice root. Drink a decoction. Also available in tincture.

Contraindicated with any steroid medications and in hypertension (See Ginseng)

High doses may cause edema due to sodium retention.

Lady's Mantle - *Alchemilla vulgaris*

Eases the changes of menopause. "controlled menstrual hemorrhage in virtually all of more than 300 women in a recent study. When taken after the flooding began, Lady's Mantle took 3-5 days to be effective. When taken 1-2 weeks before menstruation, Lady's Mantle prevented flooding. Use 5-10 drops of the fresh plant tincture 3 times a day for up to two week out of the month." — S. Weed.

Motherwort - *Leonurus cardiaca*

Stimulates delayed menstruation. It is a relaxing tonic. Smooths out an over rapid heart beat. Strengthens the heart without straining it. "Motherwort regulates and tonifies the functioning of the thyroid, blood vessels, liver, heart and uterus. For the best results use motherwort frequently (daily) for 3 months. But don't neglect to try a dropperful in a splash of water even after a flash has begun. — S. Weed

Motherwort restores the thickness and moisture of the vaginal walls.

1-2mls 3 times a day or with a flash as mentioned.

Sage - *Salvia officinalis*

A cooling herb used to dry perspiration that comes with hot flashes. Helps with mental clarity. Cook with it dried or fresh. Drink infusions or tincture form. Don't use it if you are experiencing dry mouth or have very dry vaginal tissues.

St. John's Wort - *Hypericum perforatum*

Nourishes and strengthens the nervous system. Indicated when a person is experiencing tension and is irritable through this time of hormonal changes. Uplifting. Improves sleep quality relieving both insomnia and hypersomnia. Caution: may cause photosensitivity. "Researchers have discovered that components of St. John's Wort, in fact, alter brain chemistry in a way that improves mood." —M. Murray.

Oatstraw - *Avena sativa*

Feeds the nervous system. When nervous tension leads to debility or exhaustion try Oats. May be used in cases of severe depression. Eat it. Drink it use it in your bath. Leaf stalk or grain if your feeling 'the drain'

Pasque Flower - *Anemone pulsatilla*

Pasque effects the quality and regulation of sleep. Use the dried plant only. "Pasque Flower is an excellent relaxing nervine for use in problems relating to nervous tensions and spasms in the reproductive system." —D. Hoffman. Analgesic properties relieve pain with menstruation and headaches. It helps with insomnia due to over-activity. Pasque does not contain serotonin as sometimes noted, it "controls the normal metabolic fate of serotonin. It mildly inhibits the breakdown or metabolism of serotonin already present." —D. Mowrey.

Passion Flower - *Passiflora incarnata*

A great remedy for insomnia due to nervous tension. Try anywhere from 1-6 ml (15-60 drops) before bed to put an end to sleeplessness. Start with a small amount. Inquire at the place of purchase as to what the strength of the tincture is and recommended dosage. (good advice for all remedies)

Scullcap - *Scutellaria laterifolia*

A relaxant

Valerian - *Valeriana officinalis*

Sedative. Very effective for insomnia. Reduces tension and anxiety. Pain relieving for tension headaches. Use cautiously this is a potent remedy.

Nettles - *Urtica dioica*

To strengthen and support the whole body. An Astringent used when there is hemorrhage in the body. Nettles is especially high in vitamins and minerals. It can be incorporated into a vinegar, eaten fresh or cooked (spring shoots under 6 inches tall). Drink a cup of infusion daily made from fresh or dried Nettle.

Horsetail - Equisetum arvense

Horsetail is an excellent astringent for the genito-urinary system, reducing hemorrhage and healing wounds thanks to its silica content. Mineral rich Horsetail feeds the bones. Combines well with Nettles. Add it to your daily infusion.

Other mineral rich greens such as Yellow Dock (*Rumex crispus*), Dandelion (*Taraxacum folia*), Plantain (*Plantago major* or *lanc.*) Raspberry (*Rubus idaeus*), Mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*), Comfrey (*Symphytum off.*) may be used alone or combined. Red Clover (*Trifolium Pretanse*) blossoms are also very nourishing.

The minerals are able to be extracted in water. Use these plants individually or in combination for infusions.

From Susan Weed - Old Sour Puss Mineral mix:

Completely fill a liter jar with one or more of the above calcium rich herbs. {Nettles to Red Clover on this sheet}

Use only fresh plant material. Pour apple cider vinegar over the herbs until the jar is full.

Cover with a plastic lid and let it sit for 6 weeks.

For the hardy, and those in need of iron, add 30ml or 1 tablespoon of molasses.

This vinegar taken before meals or as a salad dressing increases the digestibility of the minerals in your meal.

1 tablespoon of this vinegar will supply about 150-200 mg. calcium.

Plantain, Comfrey and Calendula cremes will soothe itching and dryness.

Read labels and ask questions. Dosage for tincture remedies depends on the strength of the tincture (plant alcohol ratio and % of alcohol) and our unique biochemical individualities.

APPENDIX A

RECOMENDED MENOPAUSE REFERENCES FOR WOMEN

Cobb, J.O., Understanding Menopause, Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1990.

DeMarco, Carolyn, M.D., The Women's Health Advisor, Winlaw, B.C.: Wild Woman Press, 1992.

Gaby, Allan R. M.D., Preventing and Reversing Osteoporosis, Rocklin, California: Prima Publishing, 1994.

Greenwood Sadjia, MD, MPH. Menopause Naturally, Updated. Volcano, California, U.S.A. Volcano Press, Inc. 1989. P.O. Box 270, Tel. (209) 296-3445; about \$18.00 Canadian, paperback, 191 pages

Murray, Michael, N.D., Menopause, Rocklin, Cal: Prima Publishing, 1994.

O'Leary Cobb, Janine. A Friend Indeed Newsletter. Box 515, Place du Parc Station, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2W 2P1, A Friend Indeed Publications Inc. 1984 to the present. Subscription price \$30.00/year (plus \$2.10 GST)

O'Leary Cobb, Janine, Understanding Menopause. Toronto, Ontario, Canada, Key Porter Books, 1993. Key Porter Books Ltd., 70 The Esplanade, Toronto, Ontario M5E 1R1 305 pages \$18.95 Canadian, paperback

Page, Laferne. Menopause and Emotions: Making sense of your feelings when your feelings make no sense. Primavera Press, Vancouver, B.C., 1994

Taylor, D. and A. Sumrall, (eds.), Women of the 14th. Moon, Freedom, Cal.: The Crossing Press, 1991.

U.S. Congress, Office of the Technology Assessment. The Menopause, Hormone Therapy, and Women's Health--Background Paper OTA-BP-BA-88 Order: New orders, Superintendent of Documents P.O.Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA, U.S. 15250-7954 \$6.00 plus 1.50 (U.S. \$), paperback

Weed, Susan, Menopausal Years: The Wise Woman Way, Ash Tree Publishing, 1992.

Daily Menopause Diary

Name: _____ Month: _____ Year: _____

Calendar Day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
ov (0-4)																																

Record 0 = none, 1 = minimal, 2 = moderate, 3 = moderately intense, 4 = very intense

Breast Sore: Side																															
Breast Sore: Front																															
Fluid Retention																															
Hot flushes - day																															
# of flushes - day																															
Hot flushes - night																															
# of flushes - night																															
Vaginal Dryness																															
Constipation																															
Headache																															
Sleep Problems																															
Feeling Frustrated																															
Feeling Depressed																															
Feeling Anxious																															

Record M = much less, L = a little less, U = usual, Y = a little increased, Z = much increased

Appetite																															
Breast Size																															
Interest in sex																															
Feeling of energy																															
Feeling of self-worth																															
Outside stresses																															
Treatments:																															
Comments																															