

Six Symptoms and Six Natural remedies for Menopause

By Dr. Meghna Thacker

How does a woman know that she is in menopause? The previous way of diagnosing it was that she should not have any menstrual bleeding for a period of one year. Every woman goes through menopause differently. Look for any of the following symptoms:

- **Hot flashes or Night sweats:** can present in different ways. Some women experience it in the form of flushing that comes and goes, others may feel hot all the time. Some women wake up in the middle of the night drenched in sweat.
- **Sleep problems:** Some women have difficulty falling asleep while others can fall asleep but will wake up in the middle of the night, unable to fall back asleep.
- **Weight gain:** As the female hormones decline during menopause, women find it difficult to lose weight or may gain weight. They feel flabby with lack of muscle tone. The body fat percentage increases.
- **Mood Swings:** Moods can fluctuate from depression to anxiety. One may feel down and cries very easily. These women come and tell me that they never used to be like this before. Once being a Type A woman, have now transitioned into a dull, sulky person who lacks motivation to get even small things done.
- **Brain Fog:** Notice difficulty in remembering things. May stop in the middle of the sentence because they lost the train of thought. Put the key somewhere and looks for it everywhere! Previously being a super mom and multi-tasking, now finds it difficult to get one thing done.
- **Dryness:** The texture of the skin and hair begins to change. The wrinkles begin to appear, as the skin gets dry. She may even experience hair loss. Basically, the natural lubrication declines, thus a woman experiences vaginal dryness and painful intercourse. The joints begin to ache for the same reason.

Six ways to help a woman transition through menopause

- **Testing**

First and foremost is to find out if a woman is in menopause. Blood work can be ordered using a regular lab, which includes FSH and Estradiol levels. When FSH (Follicle Stimulating Hormone) consistently tests 20 or more, it tells me that a woman is in menopause. Estradiol levels which usually fluctuate during the menstrual cycles, begin testing consistently low during and post-menopause.

Now-a-days there are more advanced labs available which look at the breakdown of Estrogen and its metabolites, which helps to find out if the body is making good or bad kind of estrogen. Genetic testing can be combined to find out the risk of Breast Cancer if a woman has a family history of it.

- **Botanical medicine**

Many women are determined to utilize therapies that are herbal or nutritional, or combined with natural hormones in order to create a risk to benefit ratio that they feel comfortable with.

Red Clover

At least four clinical trials have been conducted on the effect of red clover isoflavones on vasomotor symptoms. Two studies show benefit and two do not. The first two published studies on red clover and vasomotor symptoms showed no statistically significant difference between the red clover standardized extract and the placebo during a 3 month period, although both groups did improve. Two other studies of 40 mg standardized extract of red clover produced a reduction in hot flashes and night sweats. The most recent study showed that 80 mg of red clover isoflavones per day reduced the frequency of hot flashes by 44%.

Black Cohosh

Black cohosh has emerged as the single most important herb for the treatment of menopausal symptoms. There have been six well-publicized studies. In one of the largest studies, 629 women with menopausal complaints were given a liquid standardized extract of black cohosh twice per day for six to eight weeks.

As early as four weeks, clear improvements in the menopausal ailments were seen in 80 percent of the women. Complete disappearance of symptoms occurred in approximately 50 percent. Symptoms included hot flashes, night sweats, headaches, insomnia and mood swings. The other studies reported improvements in fatigue, irritability, hot flashes and vaginal dryness.

Ginseng

Panax ginseng, also known as Korean or Chinese ginseng, contains at least 13 different triterpenoid saponins, collectively known as ginsenosides. Whether it involves reducing mental or physical fatigue, enhancing the ability to cope with various physical and mental stressors by supporting the adrenal glands, or treating the atrophic vaginal changes due to lack of estrogen, ginseng is a valuable tool for many menopausal women.

- **Homeopathic medicine**

Here is a list of five homeopathic remedies commonly prescribed for hot flashes:

Lachesis

The person needing this homeopathic remedy typically experiences flushes of heat primarily on falling asleep, through the night, or on waking.

Sulphur

The woman needing this homeopathic remedy often feels warm and is worse from heat. The hot flashes tend to ascend the body, rising to the face and head, which may often feel hot. They may also frequently experience being too hot at night in sleep, especially the feet which they desire to uncover.

Sepia

A person needing this homeopathic remedy often has hot flashes that are typically accompanied by weakness, lots of sweating, with the feeling of heat usually ascending upwards. Sepia patients typically are better from hard workouts or exertion and can be emotionally sensitive and a bit nervous by nature.

Pulsatilla

This remedy would be most often indicated in a menopausal woman who has become very sensitive, down, blue and weepy. She feels better from reassurance. The hot flashes are worse in a warm room and better outside in cold or fresh air.

Glonoinum

A woman needing this homeopathic remedy often has hot flushes that are sudden, violent, and with an upwards rush of blood to the head. Palpitations in the chest are also common, as are bursting headaches rising up from neck, with great throbbing and sense of expansion as if the head would burst

- **BHRT**

Bioidentical Hormone Replacement Therapy means that you are replacing the hormone which has the same exact structure of that your body naturally made. So, if you are having symptoms due to decline in hormone production, by replenishing the deficiency with BHRT, the symptoms should go away. These hormones come from a natural, plant-based source, like yams. In the laboratories, it is made into the exact structure of the hormone. Compounding pharmacies can dispense them using a prescription from your doctor. They come in different forms, like creams, lozenges or pellets which can be implanted under the skin by a trained physician.

- **Diet**

When trying to balance hormones and reduce menopause symptoms, your diet should include plenty of essential minerals and healthy fats. Filling up on the following foods which are “hormone-balancing,” nutrient-dense and unprocessed can help you eliminate your intake of empty calories and manage weight gain.

Organic fruits and vegetables

These contain dietary fiber to manage your appetite, antioxidants to slow the aging process and phytosterols that can help balance hormones.

Cruciferous vegetables: Vegetables in the cruciferous family such as broccoli, cabbage and kale contain indole-3-carbinol, which naturally helps to balance estrogen levels.

Healthy fats and cold-pressed oils

It's true that fats have more calories than protein or carbohydrates do, but they are also the building blocks for hormone production, keep inflammation levels low, boost your metabolism and promote satiety that is important for preventing weight gain. Unrefined oils provide essential vitamin E that helps regulate estrogen production. Look for virgin coconut oil, palm oil, extra-virgin olive oil and flaxseed oil. Other sources of healthy fats include avocado, coconut milk, nuts, seeds and wild seafood.

Probiotic foods

Probiotics are healthy bacteria that can actually improve your production and regulation of key hormones like insulin, ghrelin and leptin. They're even capable of raising immune function and protecting cognitive functioning. The best sources include yogurt, kefir, cultured veggies such as sauerkraut or kimchi, kombucha and other fermented foods.

- **Essential oils**

Clary sage oil is the most effective essential oils for balancing hormones. It can help offer relief from menopause symptoms including increased anxiety and hot flashes. In addition, roman chamomile oil reduces stress, peppermint oil can help cool the body from hot flashes, and thyme oil can help naturally balance hormones.