

Hot Flashes, Sweats, and Dryness..... Oh My!!!!

Dr. Marianne Marchese

Menopause is a normal part of the aging process. The definition of menopause is the cessation of the menstrual cycle. It is not a disease condition, although is often thought of and treated as a disease. A woman becomes postmenopausal after going an entire year without a menstrual cycle. However, a woman may experience signs and symptoms of menopause years before the menstrual cycle actually stops. This period of time is known as perimenopause and can begin anytime after age 40

Some women enter menopause prematurely due to surgical removal of the ovaries, known as a complete hysterectomy. Some women undergoing cancer care may be thrust into early menopause from the chemotherapy or radiation. These women may or may not have their menstrual cycle return after cancer care. Finally, some women simply go into menopause early due to premature ovarian failure.

A blood test can determine if a woman is in menopause or near menopause. This test can be very useful to help explain symptoms a woman may be experiencing even though she is still getting her monthly cycle. Early signs are fatigue, poor sleep, hair loss, and mood changes. Often time's mood changes are an overlooked sign hormonal decline.

Other conditions can cause some of these symptoms and these conditions need to be ruled out. Hypothyroidism, adrenal fatigue and depression may mimic perimenopause and menopause. Since a women's hormones are all interconnected a women may suddenly develop hypothyroidism as her estrogen levels decline.

Stress plays a large role in women's hormones as well. Cortisol is a hormone released mostly by the adrenal gland and can easily be out of balance due to stress. Cortisol also affects thyroid function. Stress can trigger more hot flashes. Salivary testing is a simply method to test cortisol levels in the body. Thyroid function tests as well as thyroid anti-body levels need to be ordered by your physician and carefully interpreted as not to miss sub-clinical thyroid disease.

Dr. Marchese's goal is to decrease:	Treatment interventions include:
Hot flashes	Bio-identical natural hormone therapy
Night sweats	Diet and nutrition
Vaginal dryness	Lifestyle
Mood changes	Exercise
Dry skin and hair	Stress management
Decreased concentration and memory	Botanical medicine
Low libido	Homeopathy
Insomnia	Nutritional supplements
Joint pain	Bioflavonoids
Fatigue	Acupuncture

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