

## **MENOPAUSE**

### **DEFINITION**

Menopause may be defined simply as the female condition when a woman's menstrual periods have naturally ceased for at least one year. The journey to that destination, however may be at times a smooth, bumpy, or very rocky road. Menopausal symptoms affect about 70% of women approaching menopause. Typical menopause symptoms are caused by changing hormonal levels in the female reproductive system. The progression of symptoms may come and go, but hot flashes, night sweats and insomnia and many of the other common problems are experienced to some degree by 70% of the women who are transitioning through the process. Almost all women notice early symptoms while still having periods. This stage of gradually falling and fluctuating hormone levels is called perimenopause, which often begins in the early 40s.

### **SYMPTOMS**

One of the reasons that diagnosing Menopausal conditions is difficult is that many of the symptoms are also associated with other conditions as well. If you are experiencing some of the conditions listed below, and they reach a level that is disturbing your day to day activities, you should schedule an appointment with your physician.

1. Hot flashes, flushes, night sweats and/or cold flashes, clammy feeling
2. Irregular heart beat
3. Irritability
4. Mood swings, sudden tears
5. Trouble sleeping through the night (with or without night sweats)
6. Irregular periods; shorter, lighter periods; heavier periods, flooding; phantom periods, shorter cycles, longer cycles
7. Loss of libido
8. Dry vagina
9. Crashing fatigue
10. Anxiety, feeling ill at ease
11. Feelings of dread, apprehension, doom
12. Difficulty concentrating, disorientation, mental confusion
13. Disturbing memory lapses
14. Incontinence, especially upon sneezing, laughing; urge incontinence

15. Itchy, crawly skin
16. Aching, sore joints, muscles and tendons
17. Increased tension in muscles
18. Breast tenderness
19. Headache change: increase or decrease
20. Gastrointestinal distress, indigestion, flatulence, gas pain, nausea
21. Sudden bouts of bloat
22. Depression
23. Exacerbation of existing conditions
24. Increase in allergies
25. Weight gain
26. Hair loss or thinning, head, pubic, or whole body; increase in facial hair
27. Dizziness, light-headedness, episodes of loss of balance
28. Changes in body odor
29. Electric shock sensation under the skin and in the head
30. Tingling in the extremities
31. Gum problems, increased bleeding
32. Burning tongue, burning roof of mouth, bad taste in mouth, change in breath odor
33. Osteoporosis (after several years)
34. Changes in fingernails: softer, crack or break easier
35. Tinnitus: ringing in ears, bells, 'whooshing,' buzzing etc. (Source: Project Aware.org)

A number of helpful websites address menopausal symptoms, but one of the most informative, well researched and readable is [www.34-menopause-symptoms.com](http://www.34-menopause-symptoms.com).

## **TREATMENT ALTERNATIVES**

Treatment alternatives should be explored after a thorough examination by a physician specializing in women's health conditions. Depending on the severity and frequency of your symptoms, general health and family health history, your physician may recommend some form of menopausal hormone therapy (MHT) (also known as hormone replacement therapy, or HRT) for a period of time. As stress can have a significant impact on the severity of many of the symptoms, many women find that increasing their daily exercise level, eating a more healthy diet, and reducing trigger foods, like wine, spicy dishes and caffeine.

Other conditions that may be related to reduced estrogen levels such as osteopenia and osteoporosis, vaginal atrophy, and decreased libido may have other FDA-approved treatments available. When your physician completes your examination, he or she will discuss these treatment options as well.

## **PREPARING TO SEE A DOCTOR**

As many of the symptoms of Menopause are similar to those of other health conditions and diseases, it will be very helpful for your doctor if you keep a journal of your symptoms for at least two weeks before your appointment. For example, if "Hot Flashes" are one of your dominant concerns, keep a daily

notebook where you can note the time of day, pre or post mealtime, what you ate and consumed, (especially caffeine, alcohol, and spicy foods), and your stress level and your exercise routine. The same kind of information would be helpful as it relates to symptoms like night sweats, insomnia, itchy, crawly-feeling skin, dry tongue, and mood swings and irritability.

If you have a number of the menopause symptoms listed above, it may also be helpful if you give some thought to the frequency and intensity of your symptoms, and to make notes for yourself prior to the visit with the doctor.

When you schedule a visit the doctor, you should be prepared for a fasting blood test, a urinalysis, and may be asked to get a bone-density test to update your over-all health profile. It will also be helpful to take a list of all the prescription medicines and any supplements and herbal medications you may be taking.

### **PARTICIPATE IN A CLINICAL RESEARCH STUDY**

**If you have been diagnosed with a Women's Health condition or a Urological condition you may want to consider participating in a clinical research study with Precision Trials. If selected, you will receive study-related health care at no expense to you or your insurance company. Please click here to complete an on-line inquiry form or call:**

**602-931-4507**

**Compensation may be available to qualified participants for travel in the Phoenix, AZ area, including Gilbert, Chandler, Mesa, Scottsdale, Glendale, Paradise Valley, Peoria, and Sun City.**

**Participation is voluntary, and you may leave the study at any time.**