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Nutrition for Pre-Menopause and Menopause Women

By Dr. **Olga Miezio**

Women should feel healthy, vibrant and strong throughout their adult lives. If you have been told, "it's in your mind" or "live with it," read on.

The female hormones affect every cell in the body, including the brain. It is the female hormones which stimulate the brain to produce serotonin, dopamine, and neurohormones that elevate our moods. When estrogen and progesterone are out of balance, women often experience Pre-menopause and Menopause symptoms. When this occurs women may safely and effectively supplement themselves with biologically identical hormone and right amount of appropriate enzymes, required for these hormones to work, to restore hormonal balance. Because our entire system functions through enzymatic action and aging deprives our ability to produce necessary enzymes, we must supplement them! Biologically identical hormones are identical in structure to those created by our bodies. Drug company counterfeit hormones, such as Premarin, Provera and Prem Pro, are not identical and often lead to numerous health problems. If they were identical, then they could not be patented and therefore would prove less profitable. The Women's Health Initiative Study demonstrated that counterfeit hormones cause serious side effects.

First let's understand some basic facts. A woman's ovaries produce three natural estrogen hormones and progesterone. The production of hormones slows over time so that by the age of 35, a woman's hormonal production has dropped considerably. Progesterone, the feel good hormone, is the first hormone to decline and drops 120 times more rapidly than estrogen. Estrogen dominance does not mean that there is high level of estrogen in a woman's body; rather, it means that there is progesterone deficiency, so that estrogen hormones are not balanced. As progesterone declines and estrogen becomes dominant, symptoms such as breast swelling, uterine fibroids, fibrocystic breast disease, and migraine headaches occur. At menopause, the decline in estrogen leads to vaginal dryness, hot flashes, night sweats, as well as an insomnia.

Basically you can divide all women into two groups. The first group experience Pre-menopause Syndrome. The other experiences actual Menopause.

Take This Self-Quiz

You are going through Pre-menopause if you are over age 35 and have had your period within the last 6 months, you might also be experiencing one or more of the following:

- [ ] Irregular menstrual cycles, changes in the amount and duration of flow
- [ ] Anxiety, irritability, cravings, fluid retention, and mood swings
- [ ] Breast tenderness
- [ ] Brain fog – forgetting you friend's first name or where you put your keys

You are going through Menopause if you have not had your period within the last 6 months or you have had a complete hysterectomy. You might also be experiencing one or more of the following:

- [ ] Insomnia and night sweats
- [ ] Hot flashes
- [ ] Drier, thinner, and more wrinkled skin
- [ ] Joint or muscle aches and a loss of muscle tone
- [ ] Decreased libido and discomfort during intercourse

Menopause or the "Change of Life" occurs when a woman's menstrual cycle wanes and gradually stops. Along with this, the ovaries stop functioning. This natural process results from the normal aging of the ovaries and occurs when they can no longer generate ovulation and estrogen production. While the first and most obvious sign of menopause is the change in menstrual flow, the gradual cessation of estrogen production causes many physiological changes. The fallopian tubes, uterus, cervix, and

vagina all become smaller. The average American woman will experience menopause between the ages of forty-seven and fifty-one. Almost 75 percent of women will begin it in their forties. In some instances, it can begin as early as thirty-five or start as late as fifty-five. Estrogen dominance causes the liver to produce high levels of a protein, thyroid-binding globulin (TBG), which binds natural thyroid hormone in the blood, preventing it from being used properly by the cells. This is often overlooked since routine thyroid blood tests taken by most physicians do not detect functional hypothyroidism. Some common symptoms and signs of low thyroid include fatigue, cold hands and feet, dry skin, decreased mental sharpness, depression, hair loss, sluggish bowel function and elevated cholesterol, plus most painful for all women significant weigh gain. The length of time it takes to complete menopause vary, but it usually lasts anywhere from six months to three years. Most women pass right through menopause with little discomfort. Only about fifteen percent experience discomfort and distress. More severe reactions may result in depression. At one time it was thought that the changes in the body's chemistry caused these reactions. Today, many physicians believe that the chemical changes which bring on, menopause simply triggered reactions to other events that occur at this time of life. We need to be aware that as we age we lose digestive enzymes along with the enzymes that produce DHEA. There is a lot of information available on DHEA, melatonin and the youth hormones but virtually nothing on the enzymes required for these hormones to work.

Most of the women can help themselves a lot with the right nutritional program for their health. Since we are all unique, we require a special approach to all of our women's problems. So let your naturopathic doctor help you get back your wellness and vibrant health.

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