Menopause and Mood Health

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Intro

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  - Specialties: Women’s health, holistic pediatrics, digestive health, mental/emotional health

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- Complimentary 15 minute consultation
Overview

• Beyond hot flashes - Learn about the mental and emotional impact of menopause

• Paving the way for a smooth transition - How to gracefully navigate the perimenopausal years

• Discover how female hormonal changes effect the brain, nervous system, adrenals, and thyroid glands

• Connect the dots on what other hidden causes may be leading to uncomfortable menopausal symptoms

• Learn ways to help bring your hormonal system back into balance
Menopause Facts

- Menopause is 1 day
  - Exactly 12 months after your last menstrual period

- The time before menopause is Peri-Menopause
  - This typically lasts about 4 years but can last up to 10
  - Most people use the term menopause to describe peri-menopause
  - After menopause is termed post-menopause

- Peri-Menopause can start as early as age 40

- Average age is 51 years old

- 75% experience symptoms

- Menopause is not a disease!
What happens during perimenopause?

- Ovarian function declines and eggs are no longer released.
- Decrease in estrogen, progesterone, testosterone – not a steady decline but ups and downs.
- Changes in these “female” hormones result in changes in the entire endocrine system.
What happens during perimenopause? - Adrenals

- What are the adrenal glands?

- Adrenals
  - Ovarian function ↓ Adrenal demand ↑
  - Adrenal fatigue presents or worsens – DHEA declines and cortisol and adrenaline predominate
  - **Symptoms of adrenal fatigue**:  
    - Fatigue – particularly morning and mid-afternoon  
    - Midsection weight gain  
    - Blood sugar imbalance  
    - Depression and/or anxiety  
    - Stress intolerance, feeling overwhelmed

- Adrenal fatigue often coincides with low thyroid function
What happens during perimenopause? - Thyroid

- What is the thyroid gland?

- Hypothyroid (low) much more common than hyperthyroid (overactive)

- Low estrogen decreases T3 and T4 and conversion from T4 to T3

- Conversion of inactive to active is impaired by adrenal fatigue – this is why you can’t just treat low thyroid without treating adrenals too

- **Symptoms of low thyroid**: depression, (serotonin decreased), anxiety (GABA decreased), weight gain, constipation, brain fog, dry skin, hair loss, muscle and joint pain, plantar fascitis, puffy face and neck, goiter, cold
Thyroid Dysfunction

HYPO THYROIDISM
- Dry, coarse hair
- Loss of eyebrow hair
- Puffy face
- Enlarged thyroid (goiter)
- Slow heartbeat
- Arthritis
- Cold intolerance
- Depression
- Dry skin
- Fatigue
- Forgetfulness
- Heavy menstrual periods
- Infertility
- Muscle aches
- Weight gain
- Constipation
- Brittle nails

HYPER THYROIDISM
- Hair loss
- Bulging eyes
- Sweating
- Enlarged thyroid (goiter)
- Rapid heartbeat
- Difficulty sleeping
- Heat intolerance
- Infertility
- Irritability
- Muscle weakness
- Nervousness
- Scant menstrual periods
- Weight loss
- Frequent bowel movements
- Warm, moist palms
- Tremor of fingers
- Soft nails
What happens during perimenopause? – Neurotransmitters (brain)

- What are neurotransmitters? Where are they produced?
- Estrogen's Effects on Serotonin
  - Increases serotonin receptor sensitivity
  - Increases serotonin receptor levels
  - Increases serotonin production
- Symptoms of neurotransmitter imbalance: depression, fatigue, anxiety, stress intolerance, irritability
Neurotransmitters
How Hormones Are Made in Your Body

- Cholesterol → Pregnenolone → Progesterone → 17, OH Progesterone → DHEA
- 11 DOC (Deoxy-Corticosterone) → Corticosterone → 18 Hydroxycorticosterone → Aldosterone (Mineralocorticoid)
- 17, OH Pregnenolone → Androstenedione → Testosterone → Estradiol (E2)
- 11 Desoxycorticisol → Cortisol (Glucocorticoid) → Estrone (E1)
- ESTRADIOL (E2) → ESTRADIOL (E3)
Beyond Hot Flashes

- Physical Symptoms
  - Hot flashes, irregular menses (long cycles, short cycles, heavy bleeding, frequent spotting), night sweats, bone density decreases, skin and hair changes, weight gain
  - Susun Weed’s perspective on hot flashes: “the healthier the woman the more flashes she’s likely to have, as she has a stronger life force moving through her.” Susun also speaks of hot flushes being part of the shift that occurs that enables the movement of kundalini energy up the spine, leading to enlightenment, ‘but not all at once’ as she says. The work of the kundalini energy rising, as felt by hot flushes, happens in each chakra as the energy ascends, showing the woman what issues she needs to be with on her journey to the enlightenment that menopause offers.

- Mental/Emotional Symptoms
  - Fatigue
  - Depression
  - Anxiety
  - Stress intolerance
  - Insomnia
  - Low libido
  - Irritability
  - Brain fog
Depression, Anxiety, & Irritability

- May present for the first time or worsen during perimenopause or menopause
- May be predominantly one or the other or alternate frequently
- Often due to changes in hormones and neurotransmitters – so treating with just NT meds or hormones won’t resolve symptoms – both systems must be treated
Symptoms of Loss of Libido

**Emotional**
- Lack of sexual desire.
- Difficulty becoming aroused.
- Frustration.
- Low response to sexual stimuli.

**Physical**
- Vaginal dryness and pain.
- Thinning of vaginal walls.
- Painful intercourse.
Brain Fog

- Feeling less “sharp”
- Short term memory loss – forgetting words, where you put things, etc.
Energetically

- Menopause is often a time of transition in many areas of life:
  - Primary relationships shift as women often feel like this is the time to take care of themselves and use their voice more than in the past
  - Though these shifts can be stressful, they often lead to a new sense of freedom and self-empowerment
  - Creating space to “fill up the cup” is critical in easing this transition
  - Menopause is equated to the season of autumn (Maga = the 3rd season of a woman’s life, in between the season of the Mother and the season of the Crone)
  - In some cultures, menopause is embraced and honored. The woman no longer loses energy through birth or through blood and this energy is now harvested in her body and in turn creates wisdom.

- Dr. Christiane Northrup says: “menopause is designed to heal all the unhealed parts of you, that is the wisdom of menopause.”

- In her book The Wisdom of Menopause, Dr. Northrup says that the symptoms of perimenopause can be likened to the labor of childbirth – with the birth this time being giving birth to yourself. She calls menopause ‘the Mother of all wake up calls”. Everything that you have ‘swept under the carpet’ comes up during menopause, for you to deal with, to face, to heal, to let go of and to learn from as you become the next version of you. Whatever needs to come up for you to be this next, healed version of you, will show itself as physical, emotional and spiritual symptoms.
Complicating factors

- Toxic burden
  - Exposure to toxins in food, water, air, on skin – many of these toxins mimic hormone and further complicate hormonal shifts
  - Decreased liver clearance increases the impact of these toxins
    - Genetic, nutritional

- Digestive
  - Food intolerances, chronic digestive imbalance
    - Brain/gut connection
Hormone Lab testing

- Adrenals
  - Salivary – BioHealth, Genova

- Thyroid – blood test
  - TSH, Free T3, Free T4, RT3

- Female hormones
  - Saliva and urine more accurate than blood – BioHealth, Meridian Valley
  - Fractionated Estrogens

- Neurotransmitters
  - Saliva and urine - Neuroscience – not very reliable, better to tell from symptoms
Other lab considerations

- Heavy metal testing
  - Lead and mercury associated with glandular disruption

- Food intolerance testing
  - Optimize nutritional absorption and decrease inflammation

- Vitamin D, glucose, insulin, HA1C, VAP or LPP cholesterol and triglycerides

- Screening tests – DEXA, breast thermography and/or mammography, colonoscopy
Treatment - Treating the Cause

- Mental/Emotional symptoms during perimenopause have many different causes
  - Identify underlying imbalance will guide you towards the best treatment
  - This is why no 1 treatment will work for everyone

- Natural treatments may be contraindicated with certain medications. Please always consult a healthcare professional before starting new treatment.
Menopause Super Foods

- Diet not one-sized-fits-all
- Most fruits and veggies – especially brassica veggies (kale, cauli, broc, brussel sprouts, cabbage), yams, alfalfa, beets, fermented foods, maca root
- Healthy proteins – salmon, sardines, grass-fed beef and lamb, fermented and non-GMO soy (tempeh, miso, natto), beans, lentils, organic free range chicken and chicken eggs, pastured pork
- Healthy fats – from above animal sources, grass fed butter, ghee, coconut oil, olive oil, avocado, soaked nuts and seeds, fresh ground flax seeds, chia seeds
- Emphasize organic, in season, and local for maximal nutritional content
- Thyroid super foods
  - Pumpkin seeds, brazil nuts, seaweed
Foods to avoid

- Eliminate/Reduce:
  - Sugar
  - Refined carbohydrates – cereals, chips, pasta, most baked goods
  - Excessive grains, potatoes
  - ETOH
  - Caffeine
  - Food intolerances and allergies

- Packaged foods

- Foods cooked in toxic cookware

- For suspected low thyroid - avoid raw brassicas and unfermented soy
Just say NO to caffeine

- Taxes adrenals
- Increases body temp
- Aggravates hot flashes
- Makes anxiety worse
- Contributes to insomnia
Glucose/Insulin Balance

- Stabilize blood sugar
- Higher protein and fat diets help to stabilize moods, reduce overeating, and reduce fatigue.
- Avoid skipping meals
- Mood changes and insomnia are greatly effected by blood glucose levels
- High insulin is pro-inflammatory and worsens menopausal challenges with weight gain
Important Nutrients

- B Vitamins
  - B3, B5, B6, B12, Folate

- Vitamin C

- Minerals
  - Magnesium, Selenium, Zinc

- Other
  - Omega 3s, Vitamin C, Vitamin D
  - DIM, I3C, Cal D Gluc
Amino Acids

- Use with caution – especially if on medications
  - SAMe
    - Anxiety, depression, joint pain
  - GABA
    - Anxiety
  - L-Theanine
    - Acute anxiety, sleep
  - 5HTP
    - Anxiety, depression, sleep
Amino Acids – Cont.

- L-Tryptophan
  - Anxiety, depression, sleep
- Melatonin
  - Sleep
- L-Tyrosine
  - Thyroid
- Phosphotydyldserine
  - Sleep, high nighttime cortisol
Herbal Medicine

- Female hormone balancers
  - Black Cohosh, Wild Yam, Dong Quai, Maca, Vitex, Motherwort, Shatavari, Red Clover

- Mood lifters
  - Rhodiola, St. John’s Wort, Maca, Passionflower

- Adrenal adaptogens
  - Rhodiola, Centella, Maca, Schizandra, Ashwaganda, Cordyceps

- Thyroid support
  - Rhodiola, Ashwaganda, Bacopa, Coleus, Guggul, Bladderwrack

- Liver clearance
  - Schizandra, Dandelion root, Burdock root, Milk thistle

- Anxiety/Sleep support
  - Valerian, Catnip, Passionflower, Ashwaganda, Cal Poppy, Magnolia, Oats, Holy Basil, Hops
Custom Formulated Botanical Tincture
"bioidentical" hormones

progesterone

"natural" hormones

Premarin

Provera

estrogen
Bio-identical Hormones

- Custom formulation
- Estrogen
- Progesterone
- Testosterone
- DHEA
- Thyroid Hormone

Bio-identical hormone replacement therapy refers to the use of hormones with molecules that are **exact copies** of endogenous human hormones.
Acupuncture
Exercise

- Increases endorphins
  - Boosts mood

- Increases sense of self-confidence, self-empowerment

- Choose exercises that are replenishing and feel like self-care rather than self-abuse

- More is not always better
  - Over exercising can worsen adrenal fatigue
Relaxation
Questions?

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