

Hope & Healing

Menopause Adding Zest to Menopause

A heart at peace gives life to the body — Proverbs 14:30

Introduction

The once-a-month cycle that used to slow you down with PMS can now become PMZ — post menopausal zest — a phrase coined by anthropologist Margaret Mead.

She emphasized that women should seize this stage of life and live it to the fullest. No more contraception. No more pregnancies. No more periods. This, she said, is freedom.

Menopause begins when your ovaries drop their function. Estrogen production slows, then stops. Menstrual periods become irregular, then cease. These changes can occur in rare instances as early as the late thirties or they can persist until age 54 or so.

For six months to three years you may feel hot flashes, sudden chills, less sexual desire, vaginal dryness, emotional upset, and sleeping problems.

Relief for those will often require your doctor's help. But there are many things you can do to make it a time of satisfying personal growth by having a positive and optimistic outlook on life.

Facing the Menopause with Zest

Menopause can be bittersweet or it can be a time of adventure. Here are 3 things you can do enthusiastically:

1. Control your own destiny.

Become familiar with the changes going on in your body. Then be convinced that you can face these changes with adventure, as well as cope with the common stresses we all have — children's problems and parent's circumstances, for instance.

After all, a third of life is about to unfold. So, step into life by going back to

school, finding a new hobby, changing careers, and taking charge of your own health.

2. Find new friends through a support group. Shared thinking can bring practical ways to cope with the problems of menopause, as well as sisterly support for a new project or interest. Support groups can be found through YWCAs or other women's centers. Or, start your own by placing an ad in the newspaper or by tacking a notice on a bulletin board where women gather.

3. Change some things.

- **Change your eating pattern.** Regulate your temperature better by eating 5-6 small portions a day rather than 3 large meals.
- **Increase your water drinking.** Cool liquids, especially after exerting, help check temperatures.
- **Cut the caffeine.** Cola drinks, tea, coffee, the usual sources of caffeine, can stimulate the hormones that trigger hot flashes.
- **Watch alcohol.** Be observant. If two glasses of wine trigger a hot flash, try one instead. Listen to your body. Towel your brow. Take the edge off a hot flash by wiping away the sweat after a hot flash with a moist towelette.
- **Heat control.** At home, leave a window open. Turn the thermostat down. Leave off hot foods and beverages.

Staying Sexy During Menopause

Here's an important finding: Women

going through the menopause can stimulate their ovaries to produce more estrogen by having intercourse regularly (once a week or more).

To continue a fulfilling love life:

- **Soothe dryness.** Lubricate to soothe vaginal dryness, using Lubifax, KY Jelly, vegetable oils, unscented oils, or Vitamin E oil.
- **Make talk.** Communicate your feelings, not your thoughts. Build an intimate heart-to-heart relationship.
- **Create adventure in the bedroom.** Touching, hugging, exploring new positions for intercourse, can build comfort, closeness, and sensual pleasure.
- **Do the Kegel.** Learn to use your pelvic muscles to improve intercourse and to prevent incontinence. The exercise is called the Kegel. You do the Kegel by imagining you want to stop urine flow in midstream: Firmly squeeze the muscles in your vagina area for a count of 3. Relax. Repeat 10 times. Then, alternate squeezing and releasing quickly. You can practice this exercise as you drive, during a meeting, anywhere, any time.

- **Avoid pregnancy.** You can get pregnant during the time your periods are irregular and unpredictable. Usually you are out of the risk of pregnancy after you've had no period for 1 year. Some form of birth control should be continued during the uncertain times.
- **Exercise daily.** Studies show that walking, jogging, bicycling, jumping rope, dancing, swimming or other exercises can relieve a lot of menopausal symptoms. Hot flashes, night sweats, depression, and even vaginal problems are relieved.

A springier step, and more power in the hips are obvious results of exercise. And, enthusiasm bubbles up when our brains get more of the endorphins and other chemicals that naturally calm us and relieve depression.

Be sure to do stretching for flexibility, to strengthen muscles, and for relaxation.

Ways to Abolish Hot Flashes _____

About 80% of women have hot flashes that last an average of 2.7 minutes.

Suddenly your face reddens and you sweat heavily as your skin temperature rises. Then, in about 30 minutes your temperature regulator in the brain quietens down and you return to normal.

The good news: You can usually feel the hot flash coming on before the sweating begins. Be prepared. Here's how:

- **Think cool.** Your mind is a powerful machine. Tell yourself that this is normal, that it too shall pass, and that you can do something about it.
- **Relax.** Learn to sit quietly, eyes closed, contemplating, for a while everyday to relax. Learn to breathe slowly, for about 10 breaths after relaxing, to feel invigorated.
- **Learn your hot flash triggers.** Keep a diary. Does an emotional upset, a hot meal, spicy food, a warm

room, or a warm bed trigger a flash? Avoid the obvious triggers. Dress in layers. Wear sweaters, vests, and other clothes so that you can peel off a layer when a hot flash threatens. Then, you can add back as you recover and feel actually chilled.

- **Select natural fibers.** Cotton and wool will wick away moisture and give natural cooling. Not so with synthetic fibers.
- **Fan.** Carry a conversational piece in your purse and flick it out when needed, or use one of the battery powered fans to stir the air around your desk.

Summary _____

There are many gray areas regarding the treatment of menopausal symptoms. The measures listed are practical, useful, and safe. You should read widely, so that you can be well informed and better able to ask the right questions. Here is a good source of additional information:

North American Menopausal Society
c/o Obstetrics and Gynecology
Department University MacDonald
Women's Hospital
2074 Abington Road
Cleveland, OH 44106

Awaken the Miracles Within You

The Miracle of Stock-Taking

Many of us attend church often. Some read spiritual books and study the Bible. Suppose you ask yourself, "What has my faith done for me?" During this spiritual stock-taking you could evaluate — your home life, your work life, and your recreational life, examining your relationship with others in each of these areas.

Has your faith given you peace of mind? Do you face life with courage, free of fear? Do you feel wise in dealing with your problems and fulfilled in the areas of service open to you?

Real faith gives all these and more.

On the other hand, if your stock-taking reveals negative habits you can't shake and easy irritability and worry, the explanation may lie in the law of cause and effect.

You get out of faith what you put into it.

Invert 100% of yourself if you want a large dividend.

The recommendations and information in this handout are appropriate in most cases. However, for specific information concerning your personal medical condition, please, consult your doctor.