



SENIOR HEALTH

Menopause

WHAT TO EXPECT

Menopause is the hormonal transition to the time when a woman no longer experiences menstrual periods. Taking place gradually over a number of years, this life change can occur as early as age 35 or as late as age 65.

COMMON SYMPTOMS OF MENOPAUSE AND WHAT YOU CAN DO TO COPE

Hot Flashes and Night Sweats

- Wear loose-fitting, lightweight clothing made of natural fibers.
- Limit your intake of caffeinated and alcoholic beverages.
- Avoid eating rich or spicy foods.
- Drink lots of cool beverages, especially water.

Vaginal Dryness

- Avoid using deodorant soaps or scented products in the vaginal area.
- Use water-soluble lubricants for intercourse.
- Drink plenty of water every day.
- Avoid using antihistamines, which dry mucous membranes.

Emotional Ups and Downs

- Exercise regularly.
- Talk with other women who have gone through menopause.
- Avoid stressful situations whenever possible.
- Incorporate relaxation techniques into your daily life. Meditation, yoga and massage can help ease the stress.
- Eat a nutritious, well-balanced diet and check with your doctor about taking vitamin supplements.

HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY

If your menopausal symptoms become too much for you, discuss with your doctor the possibility of hormone replacement therapy (HRT). HRT uses synthetic hormones to replace the hormones your body no longer produces. Although HRT provides many positive benefits, it's not without risks and is not recommended for every woman.

Benefits of Hormone Replacement Therapy

- relief of vaginal dryness and discomfort
- less frequent and severe hot flashes
- less fatigue and depression
- decreased risk of osteoporosis
- decreased risk of heart disease and stroke
- protection against uterine cancer
- reduced risk of colorectal cancer

The Downside of Hormone Replacement Therapy

- The use of estrogen by itself has been linked to cancer of the endometrium.
- The risk of developing breast cancer is increased.
- Swollen breasts, nausea, high blood pressure and fluid retention can occur.
- Menstrual cycles may occur.

