

## *Managing the Menopause with Homeopathy*

The menopause usually occurs at around the age of 50 years of age although it can occur up to ten years earlier or later. A hysterectomy and some other gynaecological procedures will induce a premature menopause. While for some women the menopause can last for months or years, giving rise to a variety of troublesome symptoms, many women do not experience unpleasant symptoms at all. Instead, they find liberation from periods and enhanced energy. The menopause, sometimes called "the change of life", is often welcomed as a chance to change old habits and develop new interests.

During the menopause the hormones oestrogen and progesterone, which control the menstrual cycle, are produced in lower quantities until periods stop altogether. Other hormones including follicle-stimulating hormone and luteinizing hormone, now produced in higher quantities, can give rise to unwanted symptoms of the menopause, such as hot flushes and night sweats which are the most common. For some women, other symptoms include mood swings, depression, irritability, fatigue, panic attacks, palpitations, vaginal dryness, muscle and bone pain and sometimes weight-gain. At least 75% of women experience one or more symptoms and around 30% describe their symptoms as severe.

Some women find that hormone replacement therapy (HRT) agrees with them but very many do not. Some are concerned about the possible long-term effects of taking HRT, as yet unknown; others find they have to cope with unpleasant side-effects. Certainly, because HRT has an effect on the circulatory system, it should be avoided if there is any history of circulatory problems. It can increase the risks of raised blood pressure, migraines, strokes and thrombosis and should be avoided if you have suffered from any of these complaints in the past. Scientists all agree that there are also increased risks of breast tissue changes and fibroids, even if they cannot all agree on what the extent of those risks. Except for relatively young women who have had a menopause induced surgically, HRT should really be a last resort. There are so many natural ways to compensate for the hormone changes, such as changing the diet to increase the amount of foods containing phytoestrogens and calcium, taking more exercise, and using natural medicines such as herbs and homeopathy.

Natural phytoestrogens are found in soya products, such as tofu and miso, and replacing cow's milk with soya milk be beneficial. Vitamin E (between 400 and 800 iu) helps to reduce hot flushes. Avoid hot spicy food and reduce anxiety and palpitations by cutting down on coffee.

This is a time to cut down on refined carbohydrates and sugar in cakes, biscuits and sweets. Instead turn to complex unrefined carbohydrates such as whole wheat bread, brown rice, oats and potatoes which will be more satisfying and sustaining. Also increase the amount of fruit and vegetables you have each day. Eating small, frequent meals will help to keep blood sugar levels stable.

To prevent osteoporosis it is important to help your body increase the amount of calcium it can absorb from your diet. The minerals Magnesium (150-300 mg per day) and Zinc (15mg per day) aid calcium absorption in the digestive system. To protect yourself against an increased risk of heart disease after the menopause (caused by lower oestrogen levels), it is doubly important to stop smoking and increase the amount of regular exercise. Keep your weight down, eat less animal fat and add more fibre in the form of fruits and vegetables to your diet. With diet and exercise you can certainly guard against some of the worst effects of the menopause. Yoga and meditation are valuable in helping to keeping mind and body flexible and encouraging a serene approach to life.

Insomnia is one of the symptoms that frequently heralds the onset of the menopause. There are remedies that can be of help if there are no other symptoms. **Coffea** is the remedy when sleeplessness is caused by being unable to stop your racing thoughts, however it may not

work well if you are an habitual coffee drinker. When thoughts recur endlessly like a broken record disturbing peace of mind, **Pulsatilla** may help.

Whilst oestrogen levels fall by approximately 15% during the menopause, levels of the hormone progesterone fall to almost zero. Some doctors now consider progesterone to be the forgotten hormone, being equally able to protect against heart disease, cancer and osteoporosis. Progesterone can also increase libido, rejuvenate the skin and increase metabolism. It acts as a diuretic, an anti-depressant and can help to reduce hot flushes. Natural progesterone derived from Mexican wild yam is chemically quite close to that produced in the female body. Wild yam cream, available from health food stores, is just one of the safe and natural alternatives to HRT.

There are a number of homeopathic remedies, which have a remarkable affinity with the female hormonal system. Emotional symptoms are part of the picture and should always be taken into account when choosing a remedy. If you suffer with heavy periods, sweating, backache and a dragging down feeling, **Sepia** is a remedy that may help you. The Sepia woman feels physically and emotionally wrung out; the mood is low, with a tendency to be tearful, irritable, or indifferent to other's problems. **Pulsatilla** can help with hot flushes, in a woman who, though often chilly, prefers the open air. Moods may be a real roller-coaster causing her to weep easily and feel a great need for sympathy, hugs and loving attention. It is important to remember that, however troubling the symptoms, the menopause is *not* an illness. It is a period of transition that can be managed very well with homeopathy. If you suffer from menopausal symptoms, the best thing you can do is to visit a professional Homeopath.

Homeopaths value you as a whole person, not just a collection of symptoms. This means that who you are and how you feel are taken into account when finding the remedy. By building a complete picture of you and matching this to a remedy, problems can be resolved rather than suppressed with drugs, which may make matters worse in the long term. Hormonal imbalances respond particularly well to homeopathic treatment and Homeopaths treat a large number of menopausal women. Many women suffering from hot flushes, night sweats, vaginal dryness, palpitations and anxiety, panic attacks, itching, mood changes and depression have been helped by Homeopathy. Recognising that this is an important transitional stage of life, a Homeopath will help you to gain more confidence, a happier perspective, and a clearer sense of who you are and what you want out of life as well as a smoother passage through "the change".

Homeopathy has remedies to comfort and support women throughout the whole of their lives including pregnancy, birth and menopause. If you experience menopausal symptoms, do contact a professional Homeopath for advice and help. They will treat you constitutionally, based on the totality of your symptoms and personality. This will restore a healthy balance, both physically and emotionally, and bring a sense of wellbeing and poise. The menopause is a natural process so it makes sense to treat it as naturally as possible, with diet, exercise, and homeopathy. These methods enable you to take charge of your health and go forward with joy and confidence to the next phase of your life. By taking care of your health at this particular crossroads you will be laying the basis of good health into your later years.

Licensed and Registered Members of the Society of Homeopaths work in accordance with a Code of Ethics and Practice, have professional insurance and have passed stringent academic and clinical assessments.

**Presented by your Local Registered Homeopathic Practitioner**

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