

Newsletter

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Menopause

What is menopause and perimenopause?

Menopause rings the bell, welcoming and celebrating the beginning of a radiant period of wisdom and grace. This is an exciting transition. Menopause is the time that marks the end of menstrual cycles and fertility. Menopause is said to have occurred after you've gone 12 months without a menstrual period. Menopause is a natural biological process that all women experience, as they age. Average age of menopause is 45 to 50 yrs.

Perimenopause means "around menopause" and refers to the time during which body makes the natural transition to menopause, marking the end of the reproductive years. Perimenopausal phase can be anywhere around three to eight years before menopause. It usually begins in the 40's of a woman. The ovaries gradually begin to make less estrogen and hence the symptoms related to menopause can be seen in this phase. Perimenopause ends with menopause.

Symptoms-

The symptoms are different for every woman. In the months or years leading up to menopause (perimenopause) a lady might experience following signs and symptoms –

The following symptoms can be indicative of menopause:

Physical

- Irregular periods.
- DUB (Irregular abnormal uterine bleeding).
- Vaginal dryness.
- Painful intercourse.
- Atrophic vaginitis – thinning of the membranes of the vulva, vagina, cervix, outer urinary tract and loss of elasticity of outer and inner genital areas.
- Hot flashes.
- Chills.
- Night sweats.
- Sleep problems (Disturbed sleep).
- Weight gain and slowed metabolism.
- Thinning of hair.
- Skin changes (such as thinning and decreased elasticity, dry itchy skin).
- Sagging of breasts.
- Palpitations.
- Headache.
- Urinary incontinence (loss of control of urination).
- Joint and muscle pain.

Mental:

- Anxiety.
- Poor memory.
- Depressed mood.
- Inability to concentrate.
- Irritability.

- Mood swings.
- Lower androgen levels (male hormones) can contribute to the loss of sex drive.

Causes of menopause:

• Natural decline of reproductive hormones-

A woman is born with a finite number of eggs, which are stored in the ovaries. Ovaries also make the hormones estrogen and progesterone, which control menstruation and ovulation. Menopause happens when the ovaries no longer release an egg every month and start making less oestrogen and progesterone.

• Hysterectomy-

Surgery that removes both uterus and ovaries (total hysterectomy and bilateral oophorectomy) does cause immediate menopause.

• Chemotherapy and radiation therapy-

These cancer therapies can induce menopause, causing symptoms such as hot flashes during or shortly after the course of treatment.

The halt to menstruation (and fertility) is not always permanent following chemotherapy, so birth control measures may still be desired.

• Primary ovarian insufficiency-

About 1 percent of women experience menopause before age 40 (premature menopause). Menopause may result from primary ovarian insufficiency — when the ovaries fail to produce normal levels of reproductive hormones — stemming from genetic factors or autoimmune disease. But often no cause can be found.

Possible complications of Menopause

Certain complications are associated with menopause. These complications can also be linked to the normal aging process to some extent.

• Cardiovascular disease-

Drop in estrogen levels can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease in menopausal women.

• Osteoporosis-

Low levels of estrogen hormone after menopause can cause low density of bones. Bones can become weak leading to an increased risk of fractures.

• Problems associated with urination-

Vulval and urethral region can become extremely dry due to the hormonal changes after menopause. This can cause thinning of skin & reduced elasticity in the local region as well. Many a times symptoms such as frequent urination, uncontrolled

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urination may also be observed.

• Weight gain-

Hormonal changes during menopause can lead to weight gain. This can cause extra fat deposition especially around abdomen & hips. Though hormonal changes during menopause can be the reason for weight gain during menopausal phase, the normal aging process as well as incorrect lifestyle can be very much associated with weight gain.

Some times symptoms such as hot flashes, poor memory, difficulty in concentration, problems with sleep can extend upto about 10 years or so after menopause.

Investigations – Diagnostic as Well as Preventive Aspect

Menopause is an important phase of woman's life wherein she undergoes various physical, physiological and psychological changes. The signs and symptoms during this phase if remain untreated, may lead to further serious consequences.

Investigations performed during this phase include tests like hormonal assay, blood sugar, insulin levels, lipid profile, ultrasonography.

As hormonal levels may fluctuate greatly in an individual woman during this phase, blood tests for hormones are rarely advised to diagnose menopause. Hormonal tests are advised to rule out conditions like thyroid disorder and ovarian failure as these conditions also lead to irregular menstrual cycles.

Research has found a correlation between severe symptoms related to menopause and higher risk for cardiac disease. The inference of the research is, that women with the worst menopause symptoms may be at higher risk, clinically, for cardiac disease. Therefore, early prevention is the best strategy. As the estrogen level decreases, the cholesterol tends to increase, which further increases the risk of cardiac disease. Therefore, lipid profile is essentially advised in menopausal phase.

The hormones estrogen and progesterone affect cell response to insulin. After menopause, changes in these hormonal levels can provoke fluctuations in blood sugar level.

Deranged estrogen and progesterone levels also trigger weight gain in a menopausal woman which puts her at the risk of diabetes as obesity increases the risk of insulin resistance. Therefore, regular investigations for blood sugar levels are essential for early diagnosis of type -2 diabetes mellitus. The best way to manage menopausal phase is to be aware of the symptoms, seek timely medical help so as to get timely investigations done as per the need and manage

this natural phase as well as to aid in prevention of possible complications related to menopause.

Our approach- No pause with menopause.

Be aware, be smart –

Though the symptoms related to menopause that each lady experiences differ, it is extremely important to be aware of them and seek help for the same. Most of the time symptoms are ignored due to lack of priority for self and ignorance related to available solutions. Some issues such as post-menopausal bleeding, increased heartbeat, leucorrhoea (white discharge through vagina) can have serious consequences. Therefore, women should be aware of any such symptoms and seek help for the same.

Our approach in treating menopause aims at achieving harmony at physical and mental levels. A personalised treatment plan is made for each patient, which basically consists of careful history, investigations, personalized medicine, specialised treatment procedures and suggestions for lifestyle modifications. This plan is designed by taking into consideration physiological changes occurring during menopause as well as specific pathological changes as a consequence of menopause.

The personalised medicines include Rasayanas that are specialised, highly potent medicines in Ayurved which act at cellular level, creating equipoise at physical as well as mental level. Specialised treatment procedures include Panchakarma procedures such as Basti, Nasya, Shiropichu, Shirodhara which promote detoxification of the body, diminution of degenerative changes as well as upliftment at mental level.

Use of Yonipichu which is a sterilised medicated tampon is found to be extremely effective in alleviating vaginal dryness & giving strength to the local muscles. This in turn also helps in controlling symptoms such as urgency of micturition, frequency of micturition, burning at urethral or vaginal region.

Diet and lifestyle modifications are inherent part of our treatment protocol as they benefit by restricting the causative factors of imbalance in the body and enhance normal physiological changes. Thus the treatment plan alleviates the signs and symptoms, helps to maintain physiological balance and aids to prevent possible complications related to menopause.

Menopause is not a disease; it is just a transition stage of life. Team Dyumna extends a helping hand to make the transition a comfortable one. Menopause is that phase of life which can be and should be accepted gracefully to continue the journey of life with composure. There should be no pause with menopause!

Team Dyumna

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