

THE 10 DAY MANOEUVRE YOUR WAY THROUGH AND MAKE FRIENDS WITH YOUR MENOPAUSE CHALLENGE

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DAY 1

SYMPTOMS - WHAT IS NORMAL AND WHAT IS NOT

There is often still some confusion as to what menopause is and what stage you are in, even for ladies who have been experiencing symptoms for a while.

So let's first look at the three stages of Menopause.

The three stages of Menopause

1. Perimenopause.

Perimenopause, which means 'around the end of menstruation', is basically the start of your menopause journey and usually your transition into the middle of your life. During this time, the ovaries start producing less of the sex hormones oestrogen, progesterone and testosterone. It's unfortunately not a steady and linear decline as sometimes hormone levels fluctuate and cause those pesky irregular periods, which seem to catch you out at the most inconvenient of times. (If you suddenly experience heavy periods and flooding, and that is generally unusual for you, you should get it checked out with your doctor, just to be on the safe side.)

The hot flushes, insomnia, night sweats and brain fog are at their mightiest. The tissues of the vagina and urinary tract may become dry and atrophied, possibly making sex uncomfortable and maybe even painful, and making urinary-tract infections more common.

DO NOT FORGET! It is still possible for a woman to become pregnant during this phase!!! I so often hear ladies say that they didn't realise this.

If you're unsure of whether you are entering perimenopause, there are blood tests that can be done by your doctor, but they are not absolutely conclusive. However, should your blood

test show consistently high levels of follicle stimulating hormone (FSH) and low levels of estradiol (the most common form of oestrogen), combined with some of the symptoms above, that's a pretty good indication.

Many doctors at this stage will offer HRT or a low-dose birth control pill. As a Homeopath and Nutritional Therapist, it's not something that I'd personally recommend. Part of learning how to take control of your hormones and your body is by monitoring and getting a feel for how yours is reacting and functioning. By dropping hormones in which aren't natural to you, you are masking what's going on in your body and it's more difficult to take control of.

Many women however, get great relief from HRT. And many women do not. Much like all therapies, they work for some and not for others.

The average age of menopause is still considered to be 51. However, it is not uncommon at all these days to see ladies in their 30s starting to experience peri symptoms, much as it is not unusual to see young girls as young as 10 getting their periods. The ages are shifting backwards, over the decades. But on average, perimenopause begins at the age of 47 and lasts anywhere from 2 to 12 years. I do occasionally see cases of it lasting longer, but there is usually an underlying cause which is perpetuating the symptoms and not allowing the body to move naturally through. Contrary to popular belief, there is no relationship between the age at which a woman started menstruating and the age at which she enters menopause.

Chances are, you'll go through menopause at about the same age as your mother and grandmother did. Women who smoke typically enter menopause two to three years earlier than those who don't.

2. Menopause.

In literal terms, menopause is a single, isolated event in a woman's life: her last period. Of course, you can't know when your last period took place until no others follow, so this is a retrospective determination. Doctors consider menopause has occurred once you have gone 12 consecutive months without a period.

3. Postmenopause.

The period from menopause through the rest of a woman's life is called postmenopause ('after the end of menstruation').

Back in the days of questionable hygiene practices and a lower standard of living, this was really the beginning of the end. Life expectancy was low, the woman had often had several children and when in her early 50s, was already considered old. I remember my own grandmother when she was still in her late 50s and she always looked ancient. Times have changed SO MUCH since then (which was only the late 70s/early 80s, with the average life expectancy in the UK now lying at almost 81 for women. (YAY) That means that after you are free of periods, which for most are at their best a necessary and mild inconvenience, and at their worst, almost life destroying, you may have 30 plus years ahead of you to be enjoyed.

Due to lifestyle factors, women face an increased risk of heart disease, stroke and osteoporosis during the postmenopause years. For this reason, some doctors recommend hormone replacement therapy following menopause and encourage women to engage in lifestyle behaviours that reduce their risks. These include supplementing with calcium, magnesium and vitamin D; eating a nutritious, low-fat diet; and regular, moderately intense exercise.

The key phrase here is **life-styles changes**, and not hormone replacement therapy. The importance of healthy living is still very much played down by the mainstream medical world today because there is a pill for everything, which let's face it, IS easier than making the necessary changes to maintain a healthy life well into your 80s. But if you make those changes, your body and mind will reward you.

Drum roll please.....

THERE IS ONLY ONE NORMAL MENOPAUSE SYMPTOM!

1. The absence of menstruation.

That may be a very controversial standpoint, but if your body, mind, soul and spiritual life are nourished, functioning to 100%. You are relaxed, happy and full of zest, health, and love for life, then you will sail through menopause with no symptoms other than no more periods.

And there are a fair percentage of women who do sail through in this way. How wonderful that would be!!

However, in our modern world of jobs, kids, junk food, TV, stress, cities, pollution, wifi signals, and and and, our bodies are not functioning to their ultimate potential (though they are

doing an amazing job given the continual bombardment) and we therefore experience more extreme reactions when internal changes occur.

So let's get back to the real world.

What are the USUAL suspects for most women?

The most common symptoms recognised as peri menopausal are:

Irregular periods

Vaginal dryness

Hot flashes

Chills

Night sweats

Sleep problems

Mood changes

Weight gain and slowed metabolism

Thinning hair and dry skin

Loss of breast fullness

All of these symptoms can be attributed to a drop in oestrogen, which contributes to a reduced production of collagen. I say can, because for a lot of the symptoms, it has not yet been conclusively proven that oestrogen is directly at fault. But it is a natural assumption.

The lack of oestrogen has an affect on the amount of collagen produced, which has a direct affect on the skin, hair and tissues.

Lower oestrogen has also been shown to correlate to a higher level of cortisol, which in turn is responsible for the inability to lose weight, especially around the middle.

So why shouldn't I just take HRT? I hear you cry!

There are a few reasons why some ladies might consider a more natural approach before resorting to HRT.

1. HRT doesn't work for everyone. It is considered the most effective treatment, but many women report that it either doesn't work or they feel worse. This is really true of any medicine.

2. In the UK you can get HRT on prescription, which needs to be paid for each time. Some prescriptions are in two parts, which means 2 prescription charges, every time. In the US it can be even more expensive, especially if insurance doesn't cover it.
3. There are risks. Anyone with a history of breast cancer in their family will usually not be prescribed HRT by their doctor. For others there is a risk, however small. The older someone is, the higher the risk becomes. Factor in here as well, that if someone is relying on HRT to control their symptoms and not trying the natural strategies that are available, their general, overall health will more than likely be less than optimal.
4. Although you don't have to take HRT forever, if using it to control symptoms, it has to be taken for years.
5. The human body responds well to natural therapies. Complications can arise when we throw unnatural substances into the mix.

What are the UNUSUAL suspects for many women?

There are a myriad of symptoms that can occur, which some might not be aware are part of perimenopause or menopause.

These are:

1. Burning tongue

Having a burning sensation in your mouth or on your tongue isn't uncommon. This a very under-researched condition which is medically known as Burning Mouth Syndrome. It can cause pain, altered taste and a drop in saliva production.

2. Incontinence

Especially in ladies who have had children, menopause can cause your pelvic floor muscles to weaken, meaning there is less support for your pelvic organs like your bladder. This can leave you with frequent, sudden urges to urinate, which is often followed by involuntary leakage of urine. This can often be exacerbated by exercise, the very thing you need to be doing to keep those muscles and bones strong.

3. Heart flutters

Because during the menopause your hormones are very unstable, this can cause heart palpitations while your body rebalances. Symptoms include short episodes of heart racing, pounding, fluttering or beating irregularly.

4. Toothache or dry mouth

Alongside vaginal dryness and parched skin, your mouth can also become drier during the menopause, which can subsequently lead to tooth issues. Saliva is a really important component in controlling the bacteria in your mouth. When there is a lack of it, it can mean that teeth decay much faster.

5. Electric shock sensation

Some women have reported that they feel like they are getting little electric shocks on their skin. It's thought that the hormone disruption causes the nervous system to send messages to the brain about sensation. But it's not yet fully understood why it happens.

6. Allergies

Even if you haven't experienced allergies in the past, hormonal imbalances during the menopause may be the cause of a sudden sensitivity. It's also common that as we age our digestive systems don't function as well as they once did. This can also cause allergies to suddenly appear. Allergic reactions are a result of the body overreacting to a substance we either ingest, breath in or come in contact with, and our bodies produce histamine to counter what they think is an attack on the immune system. Histamine is produced in a few areas of the body but an important site of production is in special cells in the stomach. If your digestive system is not up to par, this can also be a catalyst in triggering allergies.

7. Joint pain

Oestrogen plays a role in managing inflammation levels throughout the body. Therefore when levels are low or fluctuating, women are more at risk of developing joint pain which, in some cases, can lead to acute arthritis.

8. Feeling isolated

The mix of symptoms, feeling like you're going a little crazy, the extreme nature of your symptoms and the anxiety that often accompanies this time of life, can really knock your confidence and leave you feeling isolated and alone. If the woman has had children, this is often the time that they have flown the nest and there is often still a gap between what is happening and a husband or partner's understanding of what is going on. Remember though, that you do not have to suffer alone. There are many online groups, which offer support and many many other women are suffering too. Reach out.

9. Unpleasant body odour

To accompany the hot flushes and night sweats, it often happens that the smell of that sweat can also change. Having BO where it wasn't previously a problem, can be one of the symptoms some women experience.

YOUR TASK FOR TODAY

Which symptoms do YOU have?

Tick them off, or make a list and share in the comments section under the Day 1 Video.

Irregular periods	
Vaginal dryness	
Hot flushes	
Chills	
Night sweats	
Sleep problems/insomnia	
Mood changes	
Weight gain and slowed metabolism	
Thinning hair and dry skin	
Loss of breast fullness	
Burning tongue	
Incontinence	
Heart flutters/palpitations	
Toothache or dry mouth	
Electric shock sensation	
Allergies	
Joint aches and pains	

Feeling isolated	
Body odour	
Others - enter below any symptoms which you have experienced since starting perimenopause	↓