

You're Not Losing Your Mind... You're Losing Your Hormones!

Menopause has commonly been referred to as "the change of life," but it is becoming more apparent that there are many "CHANGES of life" for women. Women of all ages are affected by "sex" hormones. Recent studies have discovered girls as young as 7 going into premature puberty. Many environmental factors such as toxins, pesticides, preservatives and growth hormones used in our food supplies have reaped havoc on our health. These substances mimic or are based in estrogens and throw off the delicate balance in our body.

For the past several decades, "birth control pills" have been prescribed for many things other than birth control. I have patients who were prescribed "the pill" at 12 and 13 years of age for PMS control. Although this did help with PMS, the information in the recent studies brings us to wonder if Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) is the best "First Choice" for these young girls with a lifetime ahead of them. There is also the question of "Post Pill Syndrome." This often leaves women infertile and many suffer from weight control problems.

Menopause is affecting women now at an almost epidemic rate. More women are peri-menopausal or menopausal now than at any other time in the history of the world. With today's stress, pollutants and general ill health, the affects of menopause can be devastating.

Many conditions such as depression, anxiety, fatigue, loss of libido, irritability, mood swings, digestive problems, and thyroid or blood sugar disorders are interlaced with hormones. Today's answers to these questions would be better addressed by understanding how all the systems of the body interact. Then we can use this understanding along with natural means to correct the imbalances.

This idea is consistent with the late Dr. Linus Pauling. His research on Vitamin C and other naturally occurring substances spearheaded the "Natural Health Revolution" in the later half of the 20th century. Did you know he is the only individual in the world to have received 2 Nobel Prizes? His definition of Orthomolecular Medicine (translated as Right Molecule Medicine) stated:

1. Everyone is different.
2. Each individual's health benefits from having the right molecules in the right amounts
3. Before turning to medicines, we should attempt to *adjust the normal body constituents to match its needs for optimal functioning.*

He didn't say "Never use Drugs." He simply stated that it is better to get the body well *naturally* before turning to drugs.

In his book, 'Discover Your Menopause Type,' Dr. Joseph Collins states that the best way to "dance through menopause" is to have your hormones in balance years before menopause starts. Of course this practice may be too late for many women, but there is still a lot that can and should be done to control the affects of menopause. No matter how old you are, NOW is the time to start.

Menopause is a normal transition all women must experience, but it is a unique experience for each woman. Pregnancy or birth may be drastically different between two women, and so can the menopausal journey.

Menopausal women have been treated per "protocol" for years, as if "all women are the same." There has been little consideration as to how each woman differs in terms of bone and heart risks, diet, lifestyle, need for supplements, and finally her personal hormonal levels. As each woman enters menopause, she should be individually supported, medically evaluated and given the appropriate advice tailored to her particular needs.

If practitioners really want to assist women in this transition and decrease cardiac and bone risks, as well as discomfort related to menopause, we must do a better job of individualizing treatment. Dr. McCollum has studied extensively and practices a comprehensive approach to this unique transition. He works with Great Smokies Diagnostic Lab, and consults with some of the leaders in hormone balancing such as Dr. Joseph Collins.

It was while studying with Joseph Collins, N.D. and understanding his outstanding work, 'Discover your Menopause Type' that Dr. McCollum realized that there is a lack of this valuable information available to the general public. The fact is that there is no single 'menopause condition'. Each woman is unique and has her

own special needs to help her regain her vitality and health. There is no single protocol or medical program that is successful for every woman. The naturopathic goal of restoring the balance of all three hormones: estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone, as well as other hormones such as cortisol, DHEA, thyroid hormone, etc. is the guiding force behind this new approach.

The level of each of the three sex hormones can be high, normal, or low. Potentially this can cause 12 types of menopause but there are a lot of other hormone issues that can make this even more complex. Here are some of the symptoms of each of the hormones.

ESTROGEN

Low Estrogen:

Hot flashes, less mentally sharp, decreased verbal skills, reduced memory, despair or depression.

Excess Estrogen:

Increase of body fat, salt and fluid retention, interference with the thyroid, increased risk of endometrial cancer, increased risk of breast cancer or increased risk of gallbladder disease. (Ref: Discover Your Menopause Type, by Joseph Collins, N.D.)

Normal Levels of Estrogen:

Estrogen maintains the regular length of your cycle. Estrogen works with progesterone to prepare your uterine lining each month to receive and nourish a fertilized egg. Estrogen makes women feel sexier, and plays a role in maintaining the breast size and density. It contributes to the health of the skin and contributes to its thickness and softness. It has mood-elevating effects, and improves memory and certain mental functions. Studies have shown that estrogen improves verbal memory and helps one learn new things. Estrogen also protects your bones and heart. (Ref: Discover Your Menopause Type, by Joseph Collins, N.D.)

PROGESTERONE

Low Progesterone:

Anxiety, poor sleep, pain and inflammation, muscle aches or joint inflammation. Higher risk of uterine and breast cancer and higher risk of osteoporosis. (Ref: Discover Your Menopause Type, by Joseph Collins, N.D.)

High Progesterone:

Excessive progesterone can counteract some of estrogen's helpful effects in your body. There can also be weight gain, or disorientation. It can also decrease the muscle tone of the urinary system and result in urinary stress incontinence. (Ref: Discover Your Menopause Type by, Joseph Collins, N.D.)

Normal Levels of Progesterone:

Progesterone is a precursor of other sex hormones. It maintains uterine lining. It is also necessary for the survival of the embryo and fetus throughout gestation and it protects against fibrocystic breasts. Progesterone is a natural diuretic and helps use fat for energy. The many other uses of Progesterone can be found in the book, 'Discover Your Menopause Type,' by Joseph Collins, N.D.

TESTOSTERONE

Low Testosterone:

With low testosterone you may notice a lack of drive and confidence, or 'vim and vigor'. Other signs are; mild depression and fatigue, loss of libido, tired and lethargic and a tendency to procrastinate about things you love doing. Low testosterone can increase your risk for disorders of the vulva, weaken muscle tone and contribute to wrinkles and sagging skin. (Ref: Discover Your Menopause Type, by Joseph Collins, N.D.)

High Testosterone:

This may make you feel agitated or irritable. High androgen levels (male hormones) are associated with ovarian diseases and menstrual irregularity, as well as facial hair, deepening of the voice, oily skin and acne. In postmenopausal women the risks associated with high testosterone are blood sugar problems, excessive insulin, and a susceptibility to heart disease and other serious problems. (Ref: Discover Your Menopause Type, by Joseph Collins, N.D.)

Normal Levels of Testosterone:

There is growing evidence that testosterone is the most important hormone for maintaining sex drive in women just as it is in men. It also directly affects the tissues of the vagina and maintains general muscle tone. Testosterone greatly influences motivation, drive, and confidence. It is also very beneficial for your skin. Testosterone has a tissue-building effect that can accelerate the repair of damaged bone and works with estrogen to rebuild joint cartilage between bones. It relaxes the coronary arteries, thus allowing more blood to flow to the heart and decreasing symptoms of angina. (Ref: Discover Your Menopause Type, by Joseph Collins, N.D.)

HEALTHY CHOICES FOR WOMEN & MENOPAUSE

- a). Use Only Natural Hormones
- b). Increase Good Estrogen Metabolism
- c). Use More Carminative Herbs
- d). Know Your Choices
- e). Use Available Resources