

Menopause, A Healthy Transition

By Krista J. Essler, LAc

Menopause is a naturally occurring transition in a woman's life. It is not a disease. It is time to relinquish the fertile mother and embrace the wise grandmother within. According to researcher and sociologist, Jane Littlejohn, menopausal complaints were almost unheard of in numerous cultures where aging brings power and status. On the other hand, in Western societies where older women are often less valued and rejected, approximately 80% experienced menopausal complaints.

This transformation typically occurs in women around age 50 but can happen in women as young as 35 due to complications such as smoking and blindness or can occur later in obese patients. Menopausal symptoms include: including hot flashes, night sweats, menstrual irregularity, uterine spotting and flooding, depression, anxiety, fatigue, palpitations, migraines, insomnia, vaginal dryness and atrophy, vaginal itching and osteoporosis.

Lifestyle and dietary habits have the greatest influence on the severity of these indicators. A life time of junk food, being stress out and of a basically sedentary existence will exasperate the intensity and frequency of the symptoms and can also prolong the duration of the menopausal syndrome.

The Standard American Diet, or SAD, is one of the greatest contributing factors to disease. Fast food, frozen food, and junk food are so readily available, that we as a nation do not take the time to really nourish our bodies. The agricultural industry produces overly abundant crops. This in turn lessens the amount and quality of nutrients found in our produce. Taking antibiotics weakens digestion since they indiscriminately kill the healthy bacteria that live in the gut. Perhaps you have been a vegetarian because it sounded healthy but now find out that you are low in Phosphorus, most abundantly found in animal proteins. Perhaps you have been eating all organic foods but your digestion has not been working so you are unable to get the true benefits. Taking a hair mineral analysis can assess the nutritional state of you body. Once you find your nutritional status, you can work

with your health care provider to find the best course of action to strengthen you body and meet your nutritional needs as you make this major life transition.

Stress is a killer, but it is also subjective. You can have two people in the same intense situation. One sees the situation as a challenge and the other as a burden. The former remains healthy and happy while the latter is plagued with depression and fatigue or perhaps rage and restlessness. Stress weakens the immune system and thereby drains nutrient reserves. This may be complicated by low nutrients reserves due to SAD. Once in a state of chronic stress, the body learns all sorts of ways to cope: taxing other hormonal systems, drawing off the reserves of the tissues and bones, the strong desire for coffee, sugar or alcohol, as well as possibly requiring more and more sleep. Taking the time to meditate and breathe for as little as 15 minutes a day can have a profound effect on your ability to deal with stress as well as improve the function of your immune system.

Some people turn to exercise which in general sounds like a great idea. The problem comes from the fact that you may now be in a weaken state and are making the problem worse by going to an aerobics class or running 12 miles per week. Gentle exercise such as yoga, swimming, walking and rebounding may be your answer until you can build your body back up.

If you already lead a healthy lifestyle then you should experience very little symptoms and may just need a slight adjustment with Acupuncture, Homeopathy, Chiropractic, Massage or Nutritional Consultation to rebalance your body's energy. If you need support to make these changes, a practitioner trained in a holistic manner would best suit you.

Krista J. Essler, Licensed Acupuncturist practices in Boone, NC. The services available at her clinic, The Appalachian Acupuncture & Herbology Clinic, include Acupuncture, Massage, Homeopathy, Nutritional Counseling and Aromatherapy. She can be reached for any further questions or to make an appointment at 828-265-3616.