

Perimenopause – Preparing for a Smooth Transition

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The scope of the subject of perimenopause is enormous, considering the physical and psycho-emotional states that are associated with it. The following are questions that I regularly get from patients:

“I am convinced something is wrong. I have gained weight, have mood swings, hot flashes, and have trouble sleeping. I am only 39 - can this be menopause already ?”

Most women aged 35 and over will have experienced some of the symptoms of Perimenopause. It is the 5 to 10-year time span leading up to the final cessation of their menstruation - menopause. As the ovaries age the production of estrogen and progesterone becomes erratic, leading many women to experience certain symptoms during this span. The following symptoms are very common to women going through a perimenopausal experience:

Menstrual Changes
Hot Flashes
Disturbed Sleep
Reduced Libido
Painful Intercourse
Poor Concentration/Memory
Anxiety
Painful Breasts

Dry Skin and/or Vagina

“My hot flashes are driving me crazy! Is there anything I can take to treat my symptoms?”

Treatment of Perimenopause

The goal in “treating” perimenopause is to alleviate the symptoms and reduce the risk of long-term medical conditions such as heart disease, breast cancer, and osteoporosis. Many treatment options are available today. I find it curious that approximately 85% of women go on a synthetic Hormone Replacement Therapy in order to alleviate symptoms of hot flashes. Yes, the same HRT, that just 3 years ago was found to put women at risk for heart disease and breast cancer! It saddens me each time I see a TV ad for synthetic HRT on CNN - there are much safer alternatives, such as bio-identical progesterone and estriol; - both should be the future of hormone treatment. However, they are only available in Canada under prescription, so you should discuss these alternatives with your doctor. (For more information on this subject go to www.drpettle.com). You may also find help with a compounding pharmacy - they already deal with knowledgeable doctors in this field and may recommend one to you.

Many of the patients entering my practice are seeking an alternative to hormone replacement therapy because either they are uncomfortable with the whole idea of HRT, or because HRT did not provide relief. The use of HRT for perimenopause and menopause is a relatively new phenomenon, while Homeopathic medicine and other natural alternatives have been safely used for hundreds of years.

In my clinical experience, I have found that about 50% of women experiencing hot flashes find relief with just two homeopathic remedies – **Lachesis** and **Sepia** . By the way, there are over 200 different medicines in the homeopathic pharmacopoeia useful in treating hot flashes, each addressing the individual symptoms presented by the patient. Proper assessment by a professional is needed in order to find the treatment that is best suited to your experience. It is very rewarding to see someone's life return back to normal. No drugs, no side effects, no risks – just gently allowing your own system to self-correct an existing imbalance.

Do you have Sepia or Lachesis symptoms? Here are a few quick tips:

Lachesis is helpful for these symptoms:

You wake up due to hot flashes. You may feel hot all the time.

You feel worse before your period, with some relief when the period begins.

You suffer from heavy bleeding as well as from fibroids.

You are passionate, intense, or jealous and very talkative.

If you experience hot flashes with no perspiration it is highly likely that you will find relief with this remedy.

Sepia is helpful for these symptoms:

Hot flashes and night sweats with a tendency to feeling chilly.

You experience a dragging feeling in the pelvic area, and constipation and fatigue.

You feel better after exercise or physical activity.

You are easily irritated or overwhelmed, and desire to “get away from it all”.

Hot flashes interfere with sleep patterns and can be debilitating. Many women describe being drenched in perspiration and needing to change bedclothes several times during the night. Unable to fall back to sleep and spending the night tossing and turning leaves them physically and emotionally drained. Of course, not all of these symptoms could be as a result of a hormone imbalance; poor adrenal functions, thyroid problems or even an intestinal microbial imbalance may be involved in some cases. A thorough patient assessment is essential in addressing the underlying causes, rather than just treating the symptoms. As you can see, there are many things you can do to help yourself experience a gentler and smoother transition through this life-changing process.