

Menopause and Beyond

Understanding Hormones, Your Body and a Holistic Integrative Approach to Women's Health

by Jan Roberts B.Pharm (Hons) Diploma Clinical Nutrition. Jan has spent almost 45 years in the health care industry and is on the medical board of Natural Health International, a leading company in the area of women's health and hormones. She is the author of six best-selling books and has made hundreds of presentation around the world to both doctors and the San Francisco based general public on integrative health, fertility, preconception and menopause.

In Western society during the last 40 years, menopause, once unmentioned and borne in silence, has come to be regarded as one of the key life-events that might compromise a woman's physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. With patients' expectations of retaining vitality and vigor into later life, doctors have primarily addressed the main physiological change in a woman's body – her reduction in hormone production. Rather than looking at the multi-faceted and interrelated aspects of a woman's physiology, doctors initially provided a solution in the form of Hormone Replacement Therapy. However HRT, which introduces synthetic or animal estrogenic compounds and/or progestins, with dose largely adjusted by a process of trial and error, is a fairly crude attempt to offset a large range of physiological changes, which include declining hormone levels.

While HRT was initially embraced enthusiastically, by a woman wishing to avoid hot flashes, night sweats and what she was led to believe was an inevitable decline in "her youth", skin and hair texture, sex drive, memory and mood - HRT is now known to come with potential risk factors. Therefore many doctors now prescribe much lower doses for shorter periods of time and/or revert to bio-identical hormones. However, whether the use of bio-identical hormones will reduce the adverse effects seen with HRT is still open to debate.

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Furthermore, even with lower dosages, unless a doctor monitors hormone levels on a regular basis, both HRT and bio-identical hormones rely on a trial and error approach and considerable time to fine tune. The other issues are: What process of delivering hormones is safest? For how long can a woman take hormones? What effects do exogenous hormones have on organs like the liver and kidneys? What if a woman has a history of breast cancer in the family? What about other hormone levels, which might be below optimal? And importantly what happens to a woman's own hormone production when it has been supplemented by external sources for an extended period?



Not surprisingly, women (and many doctors) have increasingly turned to natural alternatives, with plant-based solutions including Black Cohosh, Red Clover, Wild Yam and Soy. While certainly lacking the potential side-effects, these phyto compounds generally impact only hot flashes and night sweats, with little to no impact on vaginal dryness, libido, mood swings, energy, sleep and other hormone-related issues. Efficacy is also an important consideration when dealing with natural options. Many natural products appear the same, confusing labeling means the consumer must compare dosages,

evaluate quality and differentiate between fact and fiction. In fact, very few companies have actually completed double-blind, placebo-controlled clinical studies on their specific menopause product, and even fewer have published research in reputable, peer-reviewed medical journals. What's more, many natural alternatives only work for between 45%-60% of women and importantly, the National Institute of Health states that they have little real effect on actual hormone levels. Apart from the multiple symptoms of menopause, declining hormone levels also directly relate to a woman's susceptibility to cardiovascular disease (heart attack and stroke), osteoporosis and cognitive decline. Consequently many MDs and Naturopathic Doctors, in an attempt to avert these serious conditions, continue to prescribe hormone therapies.

Cardiovascular disease is the number one cause of death in women in the US. If you add the second, third and fourth causes they don't add up to the number of deaths from cardiovascular disease. And yet women have only low risk throughout life until peri -menopause, when it jumps significantly. The loss of hormones such as estrogen and progesterone are two key reasons for this increased risk. Estrogen increases HDL (good cholesterol), lowers LDL (bad cholesterol) and maintains the elasticity of arteries and blood vessels. Progesterone protects arteries from spasms. Women's arteries are much smaller than a man's, with spasms adversely affecting blood flow to the heart, making women many times more likely to die from a heart attack post-menopause, when progesterone levels fall. Clear evidence of the impact of declining hormone levels is seen by women who, despite the same diet and exercise program before and after menopause, only experience cholesterol, blood pressure or body weight issues after menopause.



As well as estrogen and progesterone, low levels of growth hormone, thyroid and adrenal hormones (adrenal fatigue) and the biological effects of stress, mediated by hormones produced in the adrenal glands, play a major role in obesity and its deadly consequences. These include inflammation, insulin resistance, hypertension, atherosclerosis, and other conditions that together constitute "metabolic syndrome." Excess body weight puts extra stress and pressure on a woman's heart and high blood pressure or hypertension can result in increased risk of stroke, blood clots and heart disease.

However there is good news! Leading the way in a more holistic approach is the product I use myself and prescribe for my patients. Femmenessence is a natural solution, borne of five years of research and clinical trials. It does not introduce any hormones into your body, instead it works in a completely new way - nourishing your Hypothalamus Pituitary and Adrenal Glands to naturally support your own production of not only one or two, but all hormones. Femmenessence is recommended by leading

doctors in the UK, Japan, Australia and United States as it is the First herbal product in published clinical trials, statistically significant support of key hormones such as estrogen, progesterone, thyroid, adrenals and reduced levels of FSH (Follicle Stimulating Hormone) in peri and post-menopausal women. The positive effects of Femmenessence on the whole endocrine system lead to improved cardiovascular health through raised HDL and reduced LDL, healthy triglyceride levels and reduced body weight, as well as improvements in bone density. In relation to menopausal symptoms 84% of women experienced improved energy, mood and libido and reductions in hot flashes, night sweats and vaginal dryness within 2-3 weeks.

While creating hormone balance with Femmenessence is the most important first step I take with any patient it isn't the only step!

1. Eat organically grown produce and pasture raised meat and 5 small meals a day. Ensure that you have the appropriate balance of protein, carbohydrate and fat as this leads to normal appetite, emotional stability, mental clarity, more energy and even fat loss. To achieve the balance select a protein portion (about the size of the palm of your hand), then an abundance of green leafy (low-glycemic) vegetables, reduced amounts of high-glycemic foods (such as grains, which are top-heavy in Western diets) and a serving of healthy oil (such as olive, coconut) at each meal. Also try to avoid gluten and dairy where possible.
2. Eight glasses of purified water every day is another key step. Make sure you also add "Sole" using Original Himalayan Crystal Salt which has 84 trace minerals.



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3. Electromagnetic radiation - from mobile phones, computer screens, video games, electric blankets, water beds, high voltage power lines and cosmic radiation (flying) can also contribute to compromised health, so reduce your exposure to as many of these factors as possible.
4. A practitioner guided detox - just like landfill sites that become overloaded and wreak havoc in the environment, your body can become a toxic waste dump and wreak havoc with your health.
5. Increase muscle mass - muscle mass is the number one biomarker for vitality and longevity. As muscle is lost, fat levels increase. Reduced muscle mass means poor blood glucose control, with the potential for mood swings and emotional instability. It is possible to build muscle at any age - try weight training, yoga or pilates.
6. Touch - a forgotten factor that adds to the overall burden that might contribute to a difficult menopause. Touch is vitally important throughout your life, yet generally given scant attention in Western society. Nurturing touch promotes the production of oxytocin which promotes calm, connection, love, and intimacy and can help reduce stress. Oxytocin also stimulates production of growth hormone further supporting your body's core or foundation health. Regular massages are not an indulgence!
7. Reduce stress - effective stress management involves reducing the levels of stress to which you are exposed and improving the means by which your body copes with stress. Coping better requires good nutrition, regular exercise, meditation or another type of relaxation practice, time for family and leisure pursuits, and 'time-out' to nurture yourself. Then of course, regular, restful sleep (at least 8 hours) is important and satisfying sex is one of the most effective de-stressors of all. Unfortunately, with diminished libido, a common symptom of menopause, this most fundamental and effective form of stress reduction is frequently forgotten.
8. Your state of mind also has a profound effect on your ability to enjoy long term, good health and vitality. "Love your life!" - let go of all the hurts and unhappiness from your past. Accept life as it comes and respond to change as a positive force, and that includes accepting ageing. When you accept it with grace, reveling in your acquired wisdom, enjoying and being pro-active in this new stage of life, you are less likely to resist or resent the loss of reproductive capacity and the passing of youth. You'll also find this attitude further fosters ongoing health and vitality.

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