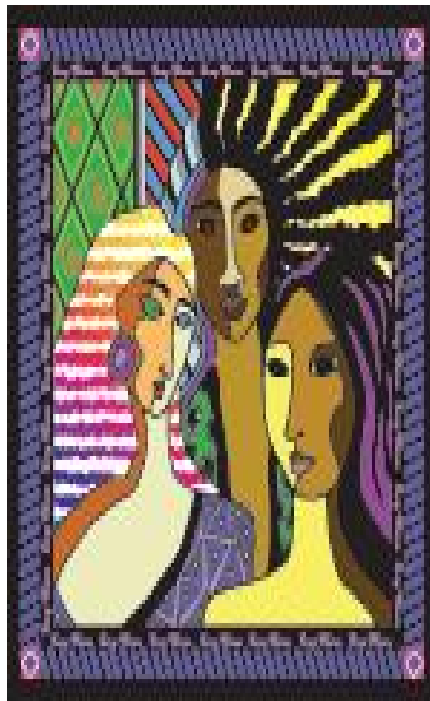


*Manage your Menopause
Successfully and Lead
A Quality of Life*



INTRODUCTION:

Menopause is normal part of being a woman; just like beginning of your monthly periods. It is a time of change and all the changes are perfectly normal. It happens to all the women as they grow older, where the body gradually undergoes many changes. That is why menopause is sometimes called the “change or change of life”.

This booklet discusses the physical symptoms, caused by the physiological changes during menopause. You will learn about changes you can be expected during menopause, the immediate and later effects of these changes on your health and quality of life.

This booklet also provides you the best possible ways to deal with symptoms of menopause. This is prepared in consultation with specialists like gynecologists, qualified nurses and the women experiencing menopause.

Prof. Prabha K. Dasila

Researcher

FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

Female reproductive system consists of internal and external reproductive structures.

- 1) The external reproductive organs play an important role in sexual stimulation.
- 2) The internal structures function as the female reproductive organs. They are ...
 - a) Uterus
 - b) Fallopian Tubes
 - c) Ovaries
 - d) Cervix
 - e) Vagina

The Uterus:

The uterus (womb) is located in lower abdomen called the pelvic cavity. It has three layers a) outer most - the covering sac b) middle muscular and c) the innermost called endometrium.

The thickness of endometrium is influenced by the hormones estrogen and progesterone.

Fallopian Tubes:

Two fallopian tubes connect the uterus to the ovaries. The ovum travels from ovary to the uterus through the fallopian tubes.

Ovaries:

The ovaries are a pair of small oval shaped organs, located one on either side of the uterus and below the fallopian tubes. Ovaries are places where the female egg cells (ovum) are stored and hormones (estrogen and progesterone) are produced.

When ovaries are at work, an egg is released into the uterus from one of your two ovaries each month this time is called **ovulation**.

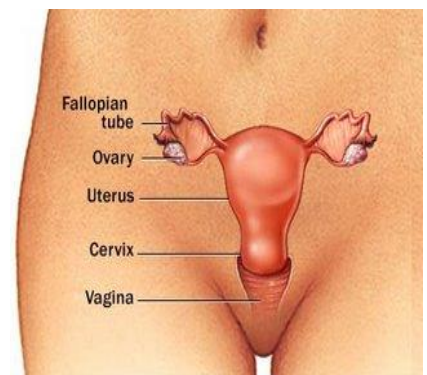
During the early part of each cycle the levels of hormones **estrogen** rise, stimulating the growth of an egg in the ovaries. The hormone, **progesterone** stimulates the lining of uterus to thicken. If the egg is fertilized by a sperm it leads to **Pregnancy** and if not, the hormone levels drops and the lining sheds down and woman has her **Menstrual Periods**. The cycle generally runs from 25 to 32 days).

Cervix:

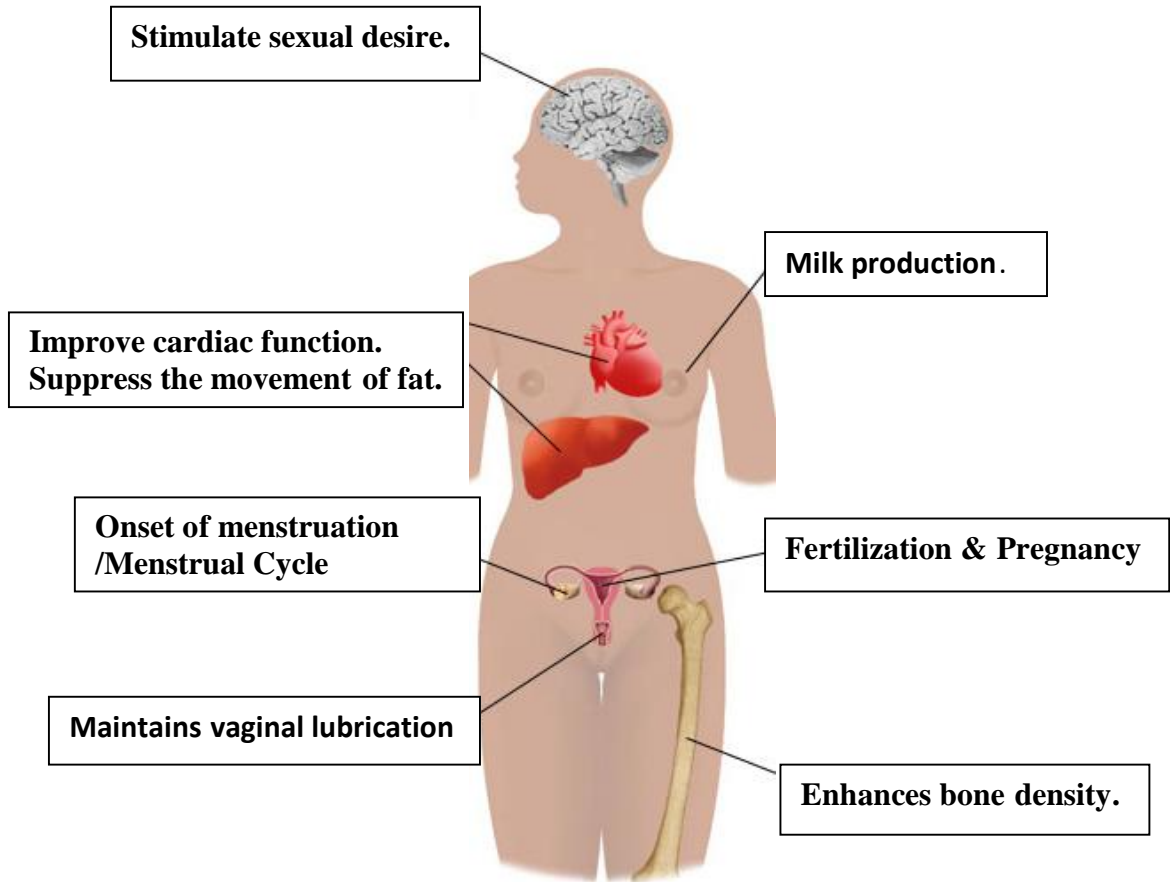
The cervix separates the upper end of vagina from the uterus.

Vagina:

The vagina is a canal connecting internal and external reproductive organs. The vagina acts under the direct influence of the hormone estrogen and certain mucus producing cells.



Role of Hormones



COMMON SYMPTOMS OF MENOPAUSE

1. Hot Flashes
2. Night Sweats
3. Irregular Periods
4. Loss of sexual desire
5. Vaginal Dryness
6. Mood Swings

CHANGES

7. Fatigue
8. Hair Loss
9. Sleep Disorders
10. Difficult Concentrating
11. Memory Loss
12. Dizziness
13. Weight Gain
14. Incontinence
15. Bloating
16. Allergies
17. Brittle Nails
18. Changes in odor
19. Irregular heart beats
20. Depression
21. Anxiety
22. Irritability
23. Panic Disorder

PAINS

24. Breast Pain
25. Headaches
26. Joint Pains
27. Burning Tongue
28. Electric Shocks
29. Digestive Problems
30. Gum Problems
31. Muscle Tension
32. Itchy Skin
33. Tingling Extremities

OTHERS

34. Osteoporosis
35. Diseases of blood vessels/heart



MENOPAUSE

What is Menopause?

Menopause means your periods have stopped permanently for the last 12 consecutive months.

When does the menopause happen?

Most women reach menopause between 45 and 55 years, with an average age of about 51 years.

What causes menopause?

As women approach menopause, the ovaries gradually become less active and produce much less estrogen and eventually stop functioning and release no more eggs.

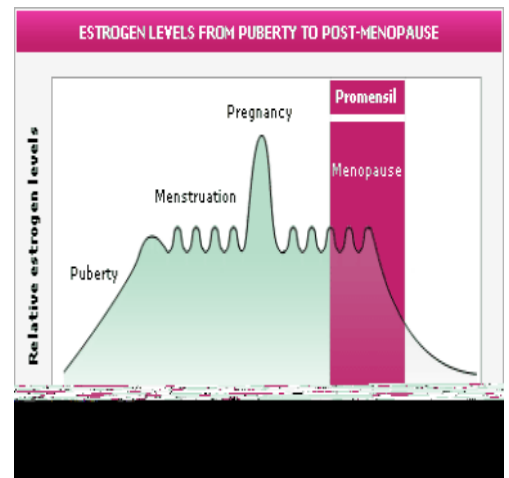
The changing hormone levels are the reasons for many of the symptoms of menopause

What is the length of menopausal transition?

Menopause does not happen all at once. No one can be sure, when a woman will go through menopause. It is a slow process and may last for several years.

Signs and symptoms of menopause described in this booklet

1. Changes in menstrual patterns
2. Hot Flashes/Flushes
3. Night Sweats
4. Disturbed Sleep
5. Heart Discomfort
6. Joint Pains
7. Urinary incontinence
8. Vaginal Problems
9. Sexual Problems
10. Gain in weight
11. Health Hazards
 - Diseases of Heart and blood vessels
 - Bone softening (osteoporosis)



1. CHANGES IN MENSTRUAL PATTERNS

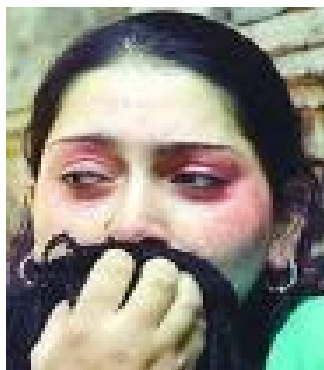
The menstrual periods stop in three classical ways....

- a) Sudden
- b) Gradual, irregular periods until menstruation stops
- c) Gradual increase in spacing of periods until stop for at least one year

2. HOT FLASHES AND NIGHT SWEATS:

Causes:

Hot flashes/flushes and night sweats are the result of miscommunication between your hormones and body system. A lowered level of hormone - estrogen tells your body that, it's very hot. The heart, nerves, glands, vascular systems quickly work together, to cool down your body



These sensations last from a few seconds to several minutes ranging from 30 seconds to 5 minutes. The frequency of hot flashes varies from several per year to many per day.

Night Sweats are extension of hot flashes. These are called “Night Sweats” because the woman wakes up drenched.

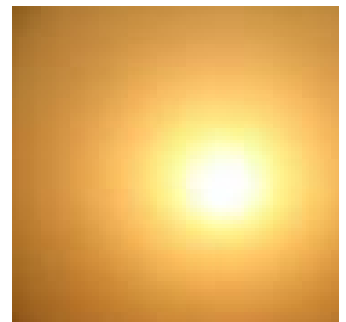
Common triggers of hot flashes and night sweats:

1. Over eating.
2. Eating food high in fat.
3. Hot and humid weather.
4. Wearing clothes made of synthetic fibers.
5. Intense exercises including sexual activities.
6. Eating spicy food and drinking excessive tea, coffee, soups.
7. Eating acidic foods such as pickles,
8. Consuming alcohol.
9. Stressful events.

TRIGGERS



Food high in fat



Hot and humid weather



Excessive tea, coffee

Symptoms of hot flashes and night sweats:

- Feeling of intense heat affecting the face, neck and chest.
- Flushing or reddened face and neck especially in fair women.
- Palpitation and increased heart rate.
- Dizziness, headache and perspiration.
- Sensation of electric current in the head.
- Feeling of suffocation.
- Wake up from sleep with heat and sweats.
- Sensation of cold.

Measures to relieve hot flashes and night sweats

- Identify triggers for hot flashes.
- Wear cotton fabric
- Wear layers of clothes that you can easily remove whenever required.
- Use bed clothes that you can put on and throw off easily.
- Take a cool shower before sleeping if no sleep disturbances.
- Keep a glass of cold water at the bed side at night so you can drink quickly if a flush begins.
- Spray cold water from a spray bottle or moist wipes can help lower your skin temperature.
- Use a fan/ cooler /air conditioner etc.
- Take deep and slow breaths when hot flashes are starting.
- Eat at least one food rich in phytoestrogen every day like mung, soya bean, kabuli chana, rajma, chawli, flaxseeds, methi seeds, sesame seeds, soya milk, soya yogurt, legumes and sprouted beans.
- Eat food stuffs rich in vitamin E like wheat germ, corn, soya bean oil, brown rice and millet to relieve hot flashes.
- Eat food high in vitamin C such as citrus fruits and fresh broccoli fruits etc..
- Take Vitamin B complex as advised by the doctor.
- See your doctor for severe hot flashes and night sweats

PHYTOESTROGENS



Mung



Flaxseed



Soybean



Kabuli Chana



Rajma & Chawli

3) HEART DISCOMFORT

Heart discomfort may be experienced generally during perimenopause and menopause as normal responses usually due to fluctuating hormone levels.

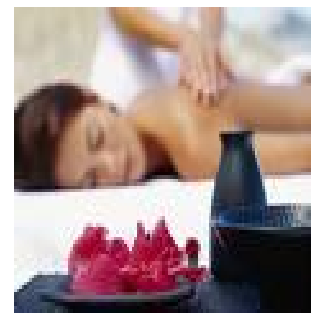
Symptoms:

- An unpleasant awareness of your own heart beat.
- Fluttering.
- Feeling the heart has skipped a beat.
- Pounding in the chest, throat, or neck.
- Increased pulse rate.

Measures to relieve heart discomfort

- Reduce intake of caffeinated beverages .
- Avoid consumption of stimulants like cigarettes, and alcohol.
- Stop activities and rest when you notice your heart racing.
- Lie down and breathe in deeply through nose and breathe out through mouth for 5 minutes.
- Check your pulse.
- Practice yoga, or other **relaxation techniques** to reduce or prevent heart discomfort during menopause. To relax.....
 - Practice deep, slow abdominal breathing twice daily for 15 minutes.
 - Stretch often during the day.
 - Enjoy a favorite hobby.
 - Get a massage.
 - Listen to a soft music or engage in reading.
 - Laugh a lot because a sense a humor helps during difficult time.
 - Sit quietly with the eyes closed.
 - Consult doctor immediately if heart discomfort is accompanied by a loss of consciousness, shortness of breath, chest pain, unexplained sweating or dizziness etc.

RELAXATION TECHNIQUES



4) DISTURBED SLEEP:

The fluctuation in the hormonal levels and various other factors may cause sleep disturbances in many women during peri and post menopausal period.

Causes

- Hot flashes and night sweats.
- Having to go to the toilet often
- Body Pain
- Stress and worries.
- Late dinner with high carbohydrate diet.
- Medications - asthma, depression.

Symptoms:

- Difficulty in getting to sleep.
- Difficulty in staying asleep.
- Frequently waking up and difficulty in getting back to sleep.
- Waking up early in the morning.

Measures to improve sleep

Most adults of all ages require about 8 hours of sleep at night to be rested and alert.

To promote good sleep.....

- Have a warm bath just 30 minutes before the bed time if no hot flashes.
- Wear loose cotton clothes.
- Drink a glass of warm milk if no hot flashes.
- Go to sleep and get up at the same time every day.
- Have comfortable bed and room temperature to sleep.
- Restrict fluid intake in the evening (awakening due to full bladder).
- Keep relaxing time rituals like massage, listening music, reading etc.
- Begin a regular exercise program during the day time .
- Avoid exercising right before bed time.
- Avoid eating before bed time – especially spicy and fatty food to prevent awakening by heart burn.
- Limit tea, coffee, soft drink and chocolate.

IMPROVE SLEEP



Drink warm Milk



Read books/magazines



Remove bedroom clock

5) JOINT PAIN

1. Hormones play a major role in a woman's bone and joint health. Inflammation is a leading cause of joint pain as lack of estrogen affects the ligaments around the joints.
2. The causes other than hormonal imbalance are...
 - Gain in weight,
 - Diet
 - Lack of exercises.
 - Loss of muscle mass
 - Stress
 - Bone Diseases

Symptoms:

The typical symptoms of joint pain related to menopause include:

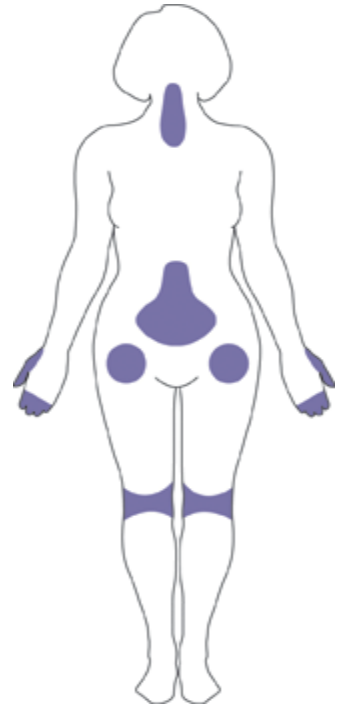
- Pain
- Stiffness of joints
- Swelling and warmth in the joints
- Morning stiffness, exacerbation of pain with exercise
- Relief from pain with rest

Joint pain usually affects the weight bearing joints such as knees, hips, feet and back but many women notice the joints in their neck, wrists, hands and shoulders become stiffer and more painful with age.

Measures to relieve joint pains

1. Reduce consumption of refined carbohydrate and sugar.
2. Eat more fruits and vegetables as they contain natural anti-inflammatory agents.
3. Add high quality multivitamins to fill any nutritional gaps as per Doctor's advice.
4. Make life style changes like stress relief and moderate exercises
5. Maintain healthy weight proportionate to your height.
6. Eat phytoestrogens like soy products, flaxseeds, apples, carrot, sesame seeds, sprouted pulses etc.
7. Consult the doctor if joint pain lasts for more than three days, moves from one joint to other, fever accompanies joint pain or progressive weight loss accompanies joint pain.

AREAS OF JOINT PAIN



Fruits and Vegetables



**Natural
Anti inflammatory
agents.**

6) URINARY SYMPTOMS:

Causes:

The walls and muscles of urethra control leakage of urine. When estrogen levels begin to drop, the walls and muscles weaken and find it difficult to control urine and it leaks.

Symptoms

- Difficulty in passing urine
- Urgency
- Passing urine more frequently by day and night
- Urinary tract infections
- Urinary leakage / incontinence when you laugh, cough, sneeze or en route to toilet.

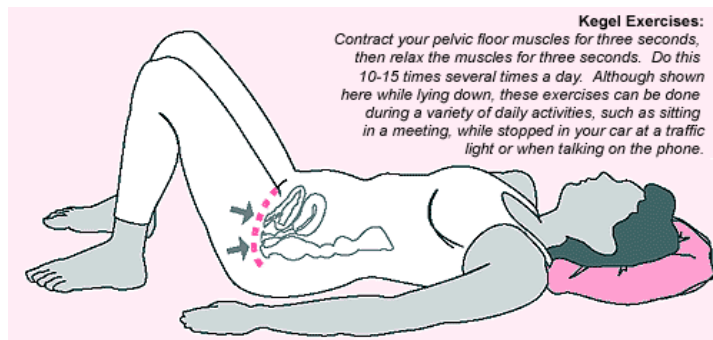
Management:

- Lose your weight if BMI is over 30.
- Urinate every 2 – 3 hours.
- Eat fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains daily to prevent constipation.
- Avoid bladder irritants like coffee, black tea, sodas, chocolate and citrus juices etc.
- Wear absorbent pads and suitable clothing.
- Keep the area clean and dry.
- Visit the doctor to rule out any pathology.
- Perform Pelvic floor exercises.

Start Pelvic floor/ Kegel exercises by locating the muscles you need to exercise. There are a few different ways to identify the muscles.....

1. Imagine you're trying to stop the flow of urine mid-stream. The muscles you tighten (contract) are your pelvic floor muscles.
2. Another way to identify the correct muscles is to imagine you are trying to stop yourself from passing gas. The muscles you squeeze to do this are pelvic floor muscles.

Once you've identified the correct muscles you're ready to begin. The exercises can be done while lying down, sitting or standing, with your knees together or slightly apart.



Step 1: Slowly tighten your pelvic floor muscles and count to four, then let the muscles relax for a count of four. As your muscles get stronger gradually increase the count to 10. Try to repeat this 10 to 15 times.

Step 2: Now tighten and relax your pelvic muscles as quickly as you can, again 10 to 15 times

- Check that you're not tightening the muscles in your legs, abdomen or buttocks, as it's important to use only your pelvic muscles. Remember to keep breathing.
- Try to do the exercises two or three times a day. Use daily routine such as watching TV, reading, waiting at the stop as cues to perform few exercises.
- **See improvements within 3-6 weeks.**

7) VAGINAL PROBLEMS

Causes:

- a) The vagina, urethra and urinary bladder are estrogen dependent. Fall in estrogen leads to marked drop in vaginal blood supply, loss of vaginal elasticity and vaginal secretions.
- b) Apart from estrogen deficiency there may be various **other factors causing vaginal problems are...**

- Poor personal hygiene.
- Personal hygiene products like soaps, sprays.
- Inadequate fluid intake.
- Detergents remain as residue on the underwear.
- Excessive use of tea, coffee, tea and alcohol.
- Use of drugs like diuretic which causes dehydration.
- Swimming pool chemicals.
- Stress.

Symptoms:

- Vaginal Dryness
- Vaginal itching
- Vaginal burning
- Pain during intercourse
- Vaginal infections.

Measures to ease vaginal problems.

- Eat a balance diet
- Drink plenty of water (at least 8 -10 glasses).
- Eat phytoestrogens containing food items like flaxseed, apple, celery, cherries etc.
- Wear comfortable underwear.
- Keep the area clean and dry.
- Choose gentle hygiene products.
- Continue sexual activities to maintain vaginal lubrication
- Increase foreplay as it assists in vaginal lubrication.
- Use water soluble lubricants for relief of dryness such as almond oil, coconut oil.
- Do regular pelvic floor exercises,
- Consult doctor for use of vaginal jelly.

8) SEXUAL PROBLEMS:

Causes:

- Vaginal dryness
- Pain during intercourse
- Decreased sexual satisfaction
- Hot flashes and Night sweats
- Decreased energy levels.
- Lack of time for sexual intimacy
- Body pains
- Fear of pregnancy
- Stress in life
- Medications – like Antihypertensive

Symptoms:

- Lack of interest or desire for sexual activity .
- Difficulty becoming aroused.
- Vaginal dryness.
- Painful intercourse.

Measures to alleviate sexual problems:

- Remain sexually active to keep the vagina and surrounding muscles toned and healthy.
- Talk to your partner and make some changes to how you have sex, placing less emphasis on penetration.
- Enjoy other bonding experiences with your partner.
- Frank discussion, new positions or use of creams or oils like coconut, almond etc may help enjoy sexual activity.
- Try to focus on activities that aren't overtly sexual, such as massage and cuddling.
- Use water based lubricating jelly as advised by the doctor if sex is uncomfortable.
- Perform pelvic floor exercises to maintain vaginal muscle tone which may be beneficial to sexual response.
- Use contraceptives.
- Schedule intimate times with your partner on regular basis.

Alleviate sexual problems



Cuddling



Holding hands



Lubricating Jelly

9) GAIN IN WEIGHT:

When we grow older it is easier to put on weight and harder to lose it. As estrogen level decreases the body fat redistributes itself around the stomach and lost around the hips and breast. This gives you an “apple” body shape.

Three mechanisms of weight gain are ..

1. Increase in energy intake (Kilocalories)
2. Decrease in energy expenditure.
3. Increase energy storage.(BMI)

Symptoms:

- Increase in body fat percentage.
- Fat accumulation around the abdomen.
- Difficulty in maintaining usual weight.
- Increase in breast size.
- Change in body shape (Pear to apple)
- Feel as though you are heavier and your clothes are bit tighter because of water retention.

Measures to minimize weight gain

- Calculate your BMI (Body Mass Index)
- Monitor your weight regularly.
- Make simple lifestyle changes for weight management.
 - Eat a balanced diet of moderate portions.
 - Have breakfast every day.
 - Eat variety of food like meat, fish, dairy products, nuts, fruits and vegetables.
 - Eat apples, peaches, baked beans, low fat milk or yogurt to suppress appetite.
 - Eat real foods not fast food.
 - Sleep 7-8 hours per night
 - Stay hydrated - drink at least 8 – 10 glasses of water.
 - Avoid eating between meals.
 - Avoid caffeine/alcohol.
- Perform regular exercises like brisk walking jogging/ running, cycling swimming or participating in household chores.
- Know your shape (waist to hip ratio)

An apple body shape is linked with increased risk of heart disease, raised blood pressure, diabetes and some type of cancer.



CALCULATE YOUR BMI

Your weight. = in Kilograms
Your height = in Meters

(Weight)
----- = BMI
(Height)²

BMI	Category
< 18.5	Under weight
18.5 – 24.9	Healthy
25.5 – 29.9	Over weight
30.0 – 34.9	Obese I
35 – 39.9	Obese II
> 40	Extreme Obesity

KNOW YOUR BODY SHAPE

Waist Circumference in cms
WHR = -----
Hip Circumference in cms

WHR associated with health risks, if it is greater than 0.85 in women.

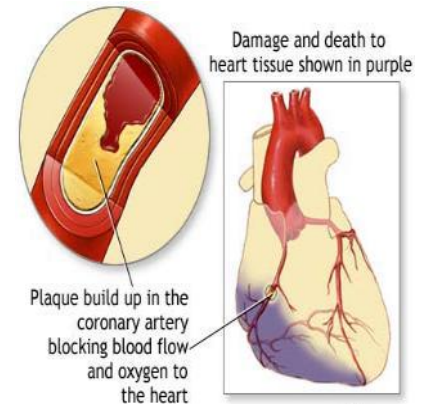
10) HEALTH HAZARDS: (Long - Term effects of estrogen deficiency)

Most signs of menopause will last only a short while but there may be new health concerns for some women after menopause. They are diseases of heart, blood vessels and osteoporosis.

a) Cardiovascular Diseases (Diseases of heart and blood vessels):

Risk Factors: You are likely to have heart diseases if you have ..

1. Obesity
2. High blood pressure
3. High cholesterol levels (bad Cholesterol)
4. Smoking
5. Diabetes
6. Less exercises
7. High stress
8. Family history of heart disease.



Measures to prevent cardiovascular diseases

1) Eat healthy diet.

- Reduce amount of saturated fat like whole milk, ice cream, creams, butter, oils, egg yolks processed meats (sausage, salami, hot dogs) etc.
- Eat fruits, vegetables, fish, cereals, rice, nuts (apricot, walnut, almond) etc.
- Increase your fiber by eating fresh fruits, dried fruits, vegetables, whole grain, breads, brown rice, corn, nuts, whole flaxseeds and soy nuts.
- Lower salt intake.
- Add garlic and ginger in the food preparation (cardioprotective).
- Drink at least eight glasses of water per day.
- Avoid consumption of fast food and readymade foods.
- Avoid excessive caffeine (coffee, tea and soft drinks).
- Avoid Alcohol consumption.

2) Maintain a healthy body weight

3) Monitor your blood pressure.

4) Stop smoking

5) Regular exercises spending 30 minutes of your leisure time on five or more occasions each week.

6) Periodic check up by the doctor.



Regular Exercises

b) Osteoporosis (Bone Thinning):

Osteoporosis is a “silent disease” that affects women primarily, causing loss of bone, leading to porous, light, and weak bones which are more likely to break. If not prevented or if left untreated, osteoporosis can progress painlessly until a bone breaks. The most common sites of fracture are the vertebral bodies, the distal radius and the neck of thigh bone.

Risk Factors: You are likely to have osteoporosis if you have ...

1. Poor dietary intake of calcium.
2. Thin body and small bones.
3. Lack of weight bearing exercises.
4. Excess intake of caffeine.
5. Habit of smoking.
6. Excess alcohol intake.

Measures to prevent Osteoporosis

- Eat food items rich in calcium like yogurt, milk (low fat or nonfat), Cheese, milk shakes etc.
- Eat diet rich in calcium from non dairy food items like spinach, broccoli, peas, sprouts sesame seeds etc.
- Consume diet high in vitamin D like Fish, liver and fortified cereals.
- Eating lots of soya products to keep your bones strong, especially in the first 10 years after menopause.
- Stop alcohol intake
- Stop smoking
- Avoid excess caffeine by limiting tea/coffee
- Regular weight bearing exercises such as walking, cycling, jogging, etc.
- Ask your doctor if you need to take extra calcium or vitamin D in pills too.

CALCIUM RICH DIET



Broccoli



Milk and Fish



Soya bean Products

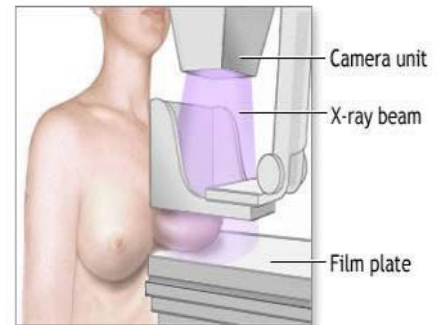
PARTICIPATE IN APPROPRIATE HEALTH SCREENING :

Before menopause, women are protected against a number of diseases such as heart disease, stroke, osteoporosis and cancer, by the hormone estrogen. However, once you stop producing estrogen, the risk of these diseases increase. Hence a thorough health screening is necessary which includes..

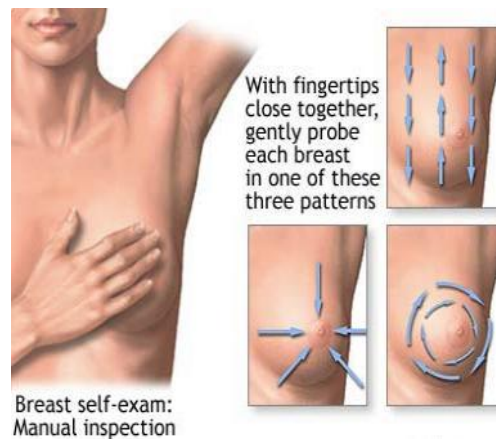
- A full medical checkup.
- **Blood tests** should include a fasting lipid profile which includes measurement of total cholesterol, LDL, HDL and triglycerides and fasting blood sugar / glucose for diabetes.
- **Routine blood pressure monitoring** – Annually and more often in people with high blood pressure.
- **Breast Examination.** Annually by the doctor and you may supplement it with self breast examination every month.
- Women should begin yearly breast mammogram, x-ray of breast, at age forty. Any palpable breast lump should be evaluated immediately.
- **Cervical Smear (Pap smear)** every two to three years.
- **Bone mineral density** to determine within 2 years of menopause.



Blood Pressure Monitoring



Mammography

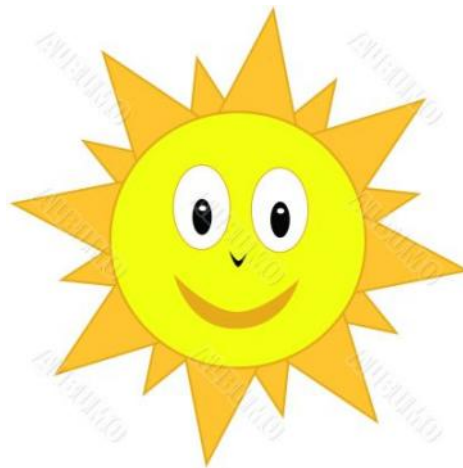


Breast self-exam:
Manual inspection

Breast Self Examination.

Conclusion:

All women go through menopause at some time in their life. Every woman's experience of menopause is different and how you decide to manage your menopause will depend on your age, what symptoms you have and how they affect your quality of life. In all women, diet, exercises and life style measures play an important role during menopausal years for promoting general well being, reducing the health risks and definitely a quality of life.



Taking care of yourself today will give you many healthy and happy tomorrows