



Navigate Menopause with the Help of Your OBGYN

SEPTEMBER IS Menopause Awareness month. The average age of menopause is 51, but symptoms can occur 10 years prior and persist for years after. No one really addressed menopause until women started living longer, say 50 years ago, so this is a “new” health issue. It can affect so many aspects of your life, yet so little time is taken to discuss and treat by the general physician. Each woman can be affected very differently, so care needs to be individualized. It can affect your whole body: weight, blood pressure, skin, mood, sex, sleep, bladder, joints, bones, bowels—really your whole body.

The OBGYN is the doctor to consult; they generally do your primary care barring major health problems and can address menopause thoroughly. Just schedule extra time with them for better results.

DON'T immediately think you need hormone levels, but DO get your preventive testing: mammograms, colonoscopy, yearly labs/paps.

Estrogen is often the most effective but should be used carefully. We now use more topical compounded treatments, titrated to you and your symptoms.

There are many herbs, such as Relizem, a plant flower, that treat hot flashes. OK to try out.

Antidepressants, Gabapentin are also considered; again your OB-GYN is best for this discussion.

There is no reason NOT to treat vaginal dryness, it can help your bladder also. Again, estrogen works great, but many patients use Revaree to “plump up” the vaginal tissue biopsy-proven hyaluronic acid treatment. Even lasers are used though most patients don't need that for vaginal health. Coconut oil is an anti-inflammatory, try that for lubrication. Talk to your OBGYN about your sex life, especially if you want one, or there is room for improvement.

Speaking of bladder, exercise that pelvic floor—not just the rest of you—consider the EMSELLA chair that does it for you. Last choice is surgery.

SLEEP AND STRESS

Make sure you sleep and avoid stress, slow it down. Much of our middle body weight gain is due to stress and sleep loss adrenaline driven. There are safe herbal sleep aids to consider, avoid valiums.


OH, THE WEIGHT GAIN

The Mediterranean diet seems to be the treatment of choice right now to reduce inflammation/sugar and get vitamins and minerals. Avoid chemically processed foods. Eat fresh fruits and veggies, nuts (not too many), fish, moderate exercise like walking and yoga, also good for stress! New studies show that our metabolism drops after age 60 and is a very complex process. Dieticians are always helpful, even if we are sure we know what to do. Our dietician is available virtually.

HAIR, NAILS, AND SKIN

Treat inside and out with collagen shots, biotin, Vitamin B, and nicotinamide which all help. Moisturize with hyaluronic acid products. They are very safe and plump your skin. And partaking in healthy skin care and treatments for beauty is healthy for you in many ways. Don't shy away from those Botox/Juvederm fillers and skin treatments.

Once you have addressed all the medical and relationship reasons for decreased sexual desire, or LIBIDO in menopause, your OBGYN can help with that, too. Here is where testosterone levels and treatment can help. There are medications that may be considered as well.

We may be living almost half our life in menopause. It's time to get an extra consultation with your OBGYN to see what you can do. To sum it up, menopause affects everyone differently, and can affect your whole body. Extra time for preventive care, and healthy eating, exercise supplements are needed. Try herbs, but don't shy from the hormones, they work so well. Trust a good OBGYN for preventive care and individual menopause counseling. 

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