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WHAT IS MENOPAUSE ?

With aging , women between the ages of 45 to 55 will experience changes in bodily functions. Menstruation will gradually become irregular as there is a decline in the production of female hormones, estrogen and progesterone .

A woman has reached menopause when she has not had a period for 12 months consecutively .

WHAT CHANGES DURING MENOPAUSE ?

The decline of female hormones often causes the following symptoms which can last from several months to several years .

- * **Hot Flashes** (sudden feelings of hot sensation) and night sweat, insomnia and tiredness .
- * **Emotional Changes** : Feelings of anxiousness, melancholy, depression and irritability. Difficulty in concentration and memory lapse.
- * **Urogenital Symtoms** : Reduction of female hormones may cause the urinary tract and reproductive canal walls to shrink , resulting in painful urination, incontinence, and recurring urinary tract infection .
- * **Sexual Drive** : Reduced sex drive and satisfaction as a result of vaginal dryness due to shrinkage of vaginal tissues. Sexual intercourse may be painful.
- * **Osteoporosis**: Lack of female hormones accelerates bone density reduction resulting in frail and brittle bones . With loss of bone density, there is increased probability of fractures of wrist , thigh bones and vertebra .

HOW TO RELIEVE MENOPAUSAL SYMPTOMS ?

For some women, many of these symptoms will go away over time without treatment . Some women will choose treatment eg. Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) for their symptoms.

Apart from hormone replacement therapy, it is important to have a balanced diet, exercise adequately and be optimistic. Developing a regular pattern of work, rest, hobbies and purpose can help to relieve discomfort that hormonal changes and aging brings.

Regular health check is also important during menopause to detect diseases early.

Health checks should include blood pressure, blood tests, mammogram, papsmear, abdominal ultrasounds , bone density checks etc.

WHAT IS HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY (HRT)?

As the name indicates, HRT “replaces” hormones the body stops producing after menopause, **helping to relieve the symptoms of menopause.**

The most common form of HRT is the oral tablet, mainly :

Estrogen and progesterone combined therapy : suitable for menopausal women with uterus. The common side effects are breast swelling and tenderness, nausea, stomach cramps and abdominal bloating .

Estrogen therapy : suitable for menopausal women who have their uterus removed .

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