

body tissue. These can help lower the risk of breast cancer and osteoporosis, but they do not help with hot flashes and can increase the risk of uterine cancer.

Lifestyle Changes with Menopause Treatment

Some of the symptoms of menopause are better treated through lifestyle changes. Exercise and a healthy diet with an adequate amount of calcium help lessen osteoporosis and heart disease risks. Other lifestyle changes to consider include:

- Stop smoking
- Lower alcohol consumption
- Aim for 30 minutes of exercise five days per week
- Healthy weight management

Treatment Later in Menopause

Menopause treatment options change as you progress through the process. In later menopause, your goal for menopause treatments is less to manage outward symptoms, which are starting to lessen, and more a focus on preventing diseases, like heart disease and osteoporosis, that are more of a risk later in the process. A variety of medications can help with osteoporosis and bone loss problems, and some heart conditions can also be treated with medications.

Whether your goal is to lower your risk of future health problems or to improve your quality of life during the menopause process, a variety of menopause treatments exist. Talk to your doctor about the best treatment options for your specific needs.

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Menopause Symptoms

Menopause Symptoms

If you are a woman approaching the middle of life, hormonal changes are going to kick in and the menopause process is going to start. The good news is that you do not have to suffer tremendously from the symptoms of this change. With the right support and help from your doctor and some lifestyle changes, you can get through the process with dignity and grace.

Common Symptoms

Symptoms of menopause will begin when a woman's estrogen levels start changing. The first symptoms many women notice include:

- Hot flashes
- Mood swings
- Mental fogginess

As the process progresses, women will experience additional menopause symptoms, including:

- Problems with sex
- Vaginal dryness
- Low libido
- Worsening PMS
- Irregular periods
- Depression, sadness or anxiety
- Sudden or frequent urinating
- Higher risk for bone loss and fractures
- Higher risk of heart disease

The symptoms of menopause occur due to the changing hormones the woman experiences. As the hormone levels begin to stabilize, and estrogen levels stay consistently low, many symptoms will decrease, and many will disappear altogether. Some, such as a higher risk of heart disease or bone loss, remain a constant through middle age and beyond, as a woman's body adjusts to her new hormone levels. Understanding these symptoms will help you choose the right treatment options as you navigate the changes menopause brings.

Mood Swings

You're laughing with your friends one minute and close to tears a few moments later. You feel tired, overwhelmed, and out of control. You're not crazy—it's one of the common symptoms of

perimenopause (the first stage of menopause, usually in the early 40s): mood swings. And there are ways to cope.



What causes mood swings?

As a woman ages, estrogen levels are fluctuating from one minute to the next, and erratic. Less progesterone is produced (but stabilizes at low levels in postmenopause, around age 55). Estrogen is related to production of serotonin, a mood-regulating neurotransmitter. Fluctuating estrogen and progesterone levels, plus other factors, cause serotonin production disruption, leading to more mood swings.

Common Symptoms

If you are struggling with common symptoms of menopause, you may wish to seek treatment. While these symptoms are usually not dangerous and are simply a part of the aging process for women, you may find that they are interrupting your daily life. If so, your doctor may be able to help with menopause

Treatment for Early Menopause Symptoms

Symptoms seen early in menopause, like hot flashes and mood swings, may need to be treated if they are interfering with a normal quality of life. Early in menopause, you and your doctor should discuss your first signs of menopause and whether you need to seek menopause treatments.

If your symptoms are really bothering you, and you are not at a high risk for breast cancer and have never had a serious heart condition, stroke or blood clot, you may be able to use estrogen supplements for a few years to manage your symptoms. However, estrogen is not without its risks. It can increase risks of uterine cancer if taken alone. When combined with progesterone, which protects the uterus, it can be an effective way to relieve many of the symptoms of menopause. Other non-hormonal treatments are available as well. These may include:

- Lubricants or vaginal estrogen deposits to combat dryness
- SSRI drugs for depression and hot flashes
- Counseling to help with mood changes

Selective Estrogen Receptor Modulators

For women who want the benefit of estrogen treatment without the dangers of hormone treatment, selective estrogen receptor modulators, or SERMs, may provide a solution. These drugs, including tamoxifen and raloxifene, act like estrogen in some