



Menopause in Young Women

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Expert Quote

'Natural Menopause is a fender bender, whereas medical or surgical menopause is like hitting a brick wall at 60 miles per hour'

Melody Cobleigh MD





Definition of Menopause

- 1 year after last menstrual period but symptoms often begin in perimenopausal years
- 2 years after your last period if under 50 yrs



Blood Test

- LH FSH known as Gonatrophins travel in blood to the ovaries
- LH stimulates secretion of oestrogen
- FSH stimulates secretion of Progesterone



What causes menopause in
the under 45's?



Chemotherapy

- 50% of women >35 who have CMF (Cytosoxan, Methotrexate, Fluoracil) go into early menopause
- 80% of women between 35-44 yrs
- Nearly 100% of women over 45yrs
- Adriamycin chemotherapy- the risk of permanent menopause is less for women under 40 (but similar in over 40's)



Chemotherapy

- Experience menopausal symptoms 6-12 weeks after therapy
- Chemotherapy-induced menopause often can be temporary in women under 40yrs



Tumour Hormone Receptor Status

- Hormone sensitive tumours contain receptors for binding hormones to their cells
 - Oestrogen Receptor Positive (ER+)
 - Progesterone Receptor Positive (PR+)
- Hormone binds to receptor stimulating growth tissue
- ER+ PR+: Response Rate approx 70% to endocrine therapy



Tamoxifen

- Anti Oestrogen
- Gold Standard Treatment for Breast Cancer
- 2-5 years, 20mg OD



Premenopausal women

- Ovaries are main oestrogen source
 - Treatment
 - LHRH (Zolodex/Goserelin)
 - Monthly depot injection 3.6mg temporary ovarian suppression
 - Surgical Oophorectomy: Most common in patients with genetic links
 - BrCa1/BrCa2
 - Ovarian Ablation/Radiation
 - Rarely used today



Side Effects Common to all Treatments

- Mood Swings
- Depression
- Weight gain
- Hot flashes
- Vaginal Dryness
- Bloating



Side Effects Common to all Treatments

- Fatigue
- Insomnia
- Loss of Libido
- Heart and Bone Health
 - Osteoporosis



Weight Gain

- After menopause, many women begin a slow but steady weight gain
- Metabolic rate slows
 - Fewer calories are needed to maintain normal weight
 - Premenopausal- if you eat 1000 calories you will burn 700 calories
 - After menopause you will store 700 and burn 300



Hot Flashes

Sudden intense hot feeling on your face and upper body preceded by rapid heartbeat, sweating and nausea. Flash is followed by flush leaving you reddened and perspiring

- 50-75% of women taking tamoxifen will report hot flashes (compared to 25-50% taking placebo)
- 10-15% seek medical attention



Hot Flash Triggers

- Alcohol
- Caffeine
- Spicy Food
- Hot Tubs
- Hot Shower
- Hot Weather
- Smoking



Hot Flash Survival Tips

- Dress in layers
- Avoid wool or synthetics (cotton sheets)
- Avoid high necked jumpers
- Keep iced water to hand
- Where possible lower the thermostat
- Health Diet
- Reduce Caffeine and Alcohol intake



Drug treatment for menopausal Symptoms

- Clonidine/Dixarit- Prescription Drug which can be used for migraine/high blood pressure- can also help hot flushes
- SSRI Drugs (Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors) This is a class of anti depressant drugs which seem to work on the 'thermostat' receptor
 - Venlafaxine
 - Fluxetine
 - Panoxetine



Drug treatment for menopausal Symptoms (2)

- Megace/Megestrol Acetate 40-160mg synthetic form of progesterone
- Gabapentin- is a drug used to treat epilepsy, migraine and nerve related pain



Side Effects include

- Dry Mouth
- Dizziness
- Constipation
- Weight Gain
- Problems with sleeping



Vaginal Dryness

- Membranes of the vagina thin, loose elasticity and decrease production of lubricating fluids
- Sexual Intercourse may become uncomfortable or even painful
- 80% taking tamoxifen will develop vaginal symptoms
 - 10% Vaginal Dryness
 - 10% Vaginal Discharge



Suggestions

- Products such as Replens and Senselle (bioadhesive vaginal moisturisers)
- KY Jelly (water based)
 - Reduce Vaginal Infections
- Tea Tree Oil



Mood Swings and Depression

- Breast Cancer treatment may leave you feeling sad, tired or depressed
- Factor influencing
 - Cancer diagnosis and treatment
 - Hormonal Changes
 - Life Experiences



Symptoms of Depression

- Inability to cope
- An overwhelming feeling of helplessness and hopelessness
- Inability to concentrate
- Memory problems
- Sleep difficulties
- Lack of interest in sex or food
- Panic attacks



Suggestions:

- Referral/assessment by
 - Social Worker
 - Psych-oncologist
- Drug Treatments
- Counselling/Behavioural Therapy
- Support Groups
- Alternative Therapies



Osteoporosis

- Decreased Oestrogen influences an individual's osteoporosis risk
- Family history of osteoporosis
- Calcium intake 400mg-700mg (normal range), increasing to 1200mg. Above 2000/2500 may lead to medical problems (hypocalcaemia)



General Advice

- Well balanced, calcium rich diet
- Avoid smoking/excessive alcohol
- Regular weight bearing exercise
- (20-30 min 5 times per week)
- Calcium + Vitamin D supplements



Alternative Therapies

- Acupuncture
- Alexander Technique
- Aromatherapy
- Ayurveda
- Bach Flower Remedies
- Homeopathy
- Hypnosis
- Magnetic
- Reflexology
- Yoga

The Seven Dwarves of Menopause



Itchy, Bitchy, Sweaty, Sleepy, Bloated, Forgetful & Psycho

