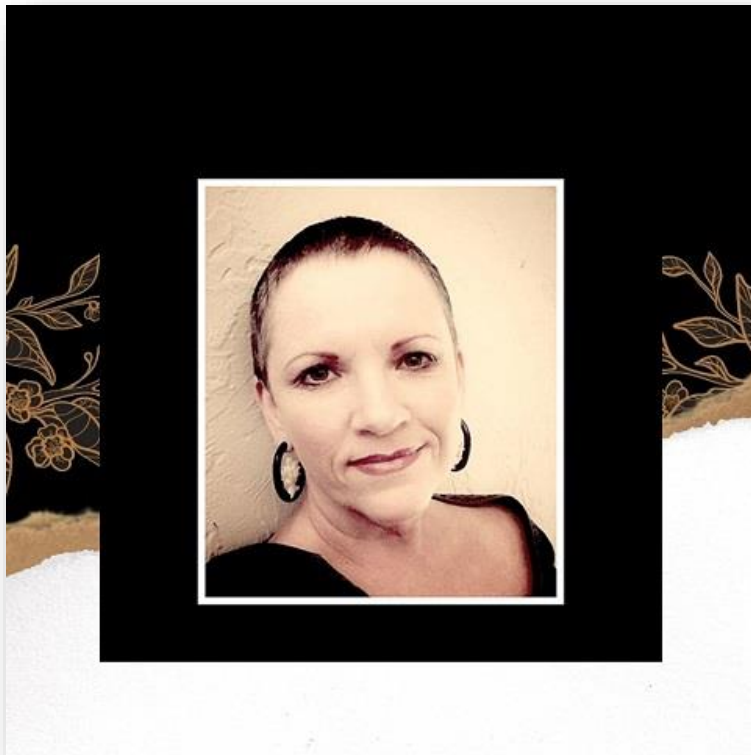




*The Navigating
Menopause Guide*

The Navigating Menopause Guide

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Hello. I'm Marie. When I was growing up, the baby boomer that I am, no one talked about the "change" to us younger women, not even after we passed the test of puberty. Not even after we had children! Only those who shared the *unmentionable cycle* spoke of it in whispers, inside rooms, away from the *children*. This generational ring was just as difficult to be allowed into as I am sure the previous one was. I had no idea what lay up and over that menopausal hill, none *what-so-ever*. I don't think I even knew there *was* such a hill. I saw life as one straight, long line that stretched further than I could ever see. Such is youth.

Oh, I knew I would stop having periods, and that gravity would take over. I wasn't sure what caused hot flashes, but I had heard mention of them and had heard reports that they could be quite dreadful. I knew they were a symptom of *the change* before entering that last circle of life, whatever that meant. Still, no one ever told me about other changes that would take place, such as my skin getting dry and rough or that my hair would thin and fall out in more places than one, that an army of wrinkles would rush in and

conquer what used to be my face and hands, that my throat would sag under my chin, my breasts would sleep under my armpits at night, my stomach would bulge and lay sideways in my sleep, my rear end would dimple (and not cutely), that I wouldn't be able to eat certain foods anymore, sleep well, sleep *at all*, or that the hot-flashes I suspected I might someday have, would send me running naked to my balcony in the middle of the night, in the dead of winter, *in the snow!* And, what is worse is that no one warned me my vagina would be someday be spoken of by doctors mumbling from behind their clipboards, in terms of being a "friendly" or "unfriendly" *environment*, for goodness sake!

I didn't know. Now, I know. So should you. These things are bound to upset, frighten, and frustrate you more than anyone else because you are you, and you feel so profoundly, on so many levels, the sensitive woman that you are.

While menopause is not a stress syndrome, many Highly Sensitive Women begin to develop stress syndromes during this period of their life cycle, when hormone levels dip, dive, and then swim away.

I wrote *The Navigating Menopause Guide* to share the secrets of *the change* and how all-natural, old-world remedies can help women navigate menopause.

Some women sail through menopause, hardly noticing. Most are happy they are no longer having periods and find the personal freedom of not worrying about getting pregnant adds to the richness of their sex life. By the time we are in our 50s, most of us have shifted our priorities from ego-based love to appreciating true intimacy. This is all well and good but for those of us who are highly sensitive or live with a chronic condition, menopause may be the time in our lives when we're bombarded with many challenging symptoms.

When Does Menopause Begin?

Menopause begins at the end of your last period when the ovaries no longer respond to releasing eggs each month, which reduces the amount of estrogen and progesterone produced. The decreased levels of these hormones give rise to the symptoms of menopause. In the United States, women as young as 30 years old, with girls reaching their menses at earlier ages than ever, due to the poor quality of food.

You may have irregular periods, even as much as a few years, before ever reaching menopause. And you may or may not experience some of the symptoms of menopause during this time. This particular cycle of menopause is called *Perimenopause*. During these irregular periods, you may bleed more heavily.

Post-menopause is associated with the phase after menses stop altogether, for whatever reason. Women who have only their uterus removed, with ovaries left intact, will go through menopause within 2-3 years after surgery.

Signs & Symptoms of Menopause

- Changed or absent monthly flow
- Tinnitus (ringing in one or both ears)
- Feeling overwhelmed, easily irritated, anxiety attacks, mood swings, aggressiveness or violence, depression, and apathy.
- Loose teeth and receding gums
- Appetite changes
- Mid-body weight gain
- Hair thinning (or falling out)
- Feeling like a *Case of Ugly* or a *Hot Mess*
- Lack of interest in making love
- Loss of muscle tone (upper arms, breasts, stomach, and butt sag, crepey skin)
- Mourning your youthfulness (dwelling on how you used to look or feel)
- Headaches, backaches, muscle, and joint ache and stiffness, and overall pain
- Tiredness and fatigue
- Losing words and forgetfulness
- Sleep disturbances, including insomnia
- Suicidal daydreams
- Feeling too warm, flushing, having hot flashes or night sweats.
- Vaginal dryness, irritation, pain, discharge, and vaginal skin color changes
- Brain fog and lack of focus or perspective
- Bladder changes (sensitivity, urgency, burning, incontinence, tendency to experience bladder infections)
- Having no interest in leaving the house

The Role of Estrogen

Estrogen, the female hormone, is a steroid, a fat-soluble molecule related to cholesterol. Estrogen provides a female appearance, stimulates the uterine lining, and helps maintain bone mass by preventing calcium loss. One of estrogen's other functions is to support collagen and elastic fibers. During menopause, estrogen levels decline, which can cause unpleasant symptoms, such as vaginal atrophy and dryness. Progesterone and testosterone levels may decrease instead of estrogen, creating a state of estrogen dominance. Estrogen dominance triggers the release of the stress hormone cortisol, which triggers the release of histamines, which, by the way, triggers herpes breakouts and *Interstitial Cystitis*. Unbalanced hormonal levels cause the symptoms of menopause, such as moodiness, because our hormones make up who we are on an emotional level.

The Role of Progesterone

A sign of progesterone deficiency (and resulting estrogen dominance) is weight gain. Ask any woman on *Estrogen Replacement Therapy* (ERT), and she will tell you she has gained weight since beginning treatment from using estrogen alone.

Progesterone is the precursor to estrogen and must be available to produce all other hormones in the body. While estrogen can help with hot flashes and vaginal dryness, it's believed that taking progesterone alone can return estrogen levels to normal. However, not everyone agrees with this theory. Most agree that cycling both estrogen and progesterone provide the best results in relieving menopausal symptoms in women who still have their uterus intact. Women who have had their uterus removed (even if they still have ovaries) don't need to use progesterone products.

Progesterone FYI

- *Zinc, Magnesium, GABA, and B-6* help to produce progesterone.
- Low progesterone (and low Iron) can cause anxiety attacks.
- Too much *Copper* (due to *Zinc* deficiency) leads to progesterone deficiency and estrogen dominance.

Synthetic vs. Bio-identical Hormones

- **Synthetic Estrogen:** Premarin and other conjugated estrogens.
- **Synthetic Progesterone:** Provera, Amen, Prempro (a combination of Premarin and Provera), Norethindrone, Norgestimate, and Nordestrel.
- **Synthetic Testosterone:** Methyltestosterone, Estratest (estradiol and synthetic testosterone), and Premarin (plus synthetic testosterone).
- **Bio-identical Estrogen:** Estradiol, Estrone, and Estriol are synthesized in a lab from plant extracts (soybeans and yams) and designed to be molecularly similar to hormones in our bodies.
- **Bio-identical Progesterone:** USP progesterone (Pro-Gest, Prometrium, and Crinone) is produced from Wild Yam and designed to be molecularly the same as the hormones in our bodies.
- **Bio-identical Testosterone:** Dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA) is an adrenal precursor to testosterone.

NOTE: While bio-identical hormones are much safer, they can still have the same side effects as synthetic hormones. For example, estrogen creams (including bio-identical and over-the-counter) commonly cause very severe intestinal cramps. I've experienced this myself. Also, HRTs can cause deficiencies in B vitamins, especially B-6 and folic acid. Therefore, eating more B vitamin-containing foods or taking a B complex supplement is helpful. Furthermore, studies show that Estrogen Replacement Therapy (ERT) and Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT), where Estrogen and Progesterone are combined, with all of the good and the bad that go along with them, work no better for you than stress management, alternative therapies, lifestyle modification, a healthy diet, and exercise.

Before Using Hormone Products of Any Kind, Have Your Blood Tested

Hormone levels are checked through simple blood tests. However, saliva testing may more accurately reveal hormone levels. Regardless of the method used, you should probably test your hormones every 3-6 months, and you should have the doses of any hormonal product you are using changed accordingly. It is essential to have your hormone dosages prescribed according to your blood test results. Should you have a higher risk of cancer, you'll want to discuss your options with your doctor before using HRTs (synthetic or bio-identical).

Over-the-Counter Bio-Identical Hormones

Bio-identical hormones are not to be used indefinitely, but only for as long as you are going through menopause or your blood tests reveal their need. At some point, your body should stabilize, although in today's world, with today's ever-increasing stressors, it can be hard to say when that might be, which is where having blood tests would be beneficial for testing for deficiencies. However, when you begin to feel balanced (after about three months), you may reduce the dosage and continue the same schedule, at the reduced dose, for as long as you feel you need it. If you wake up feeling "blah", unmotivated, and generally like you could say "Whatever." to the world, you might need to increase your estrogen. On the other hand, if you wake up feeling anxious, uptight, and have tender breasts, you might need a little less.

Bio-identical estrogen cream is available over-the-counter

Progesterone Cream

Progesterone cream is available for purchase in stores and available online. It is derived from wild yam or soy. A two-ounce jar should contain 800 mg of progesterone. Make sure it states "USP Progesterone" on the label, which means it has been made in a lab with the guarantee of the correct dosage per ounce. Don't use a cream that contains *Mineral Oil*, which blocks progesterone absorption. Also, before sexual encounters, apply your cream to an area that won't be receiving skin-on-skin friction, or your partner will absorb your "hormones".

They say there are no known adverse effects of using progesterone creams. However, be a little wary when you are told there are no side effects. There can be side effects to anything and everything. For example, some brand labels state precautions concerning the manufacturer's ingredients. And many progesterone cream labels will tell you to stop taking it if you develop a skin rash, acne, or begin to spot or bleed vaginally. Are these not side effects? Generally speaking, progesterone cream is very safe to use when used correctly. And, once you reduce your dose or stop taking it, it leaves your system within as little as 24 hours.

Some say women who no longer have a uterus have less need for progesterone because one of progesterone's primary functions is to keep the uterus healthy and prepared for an embryo. However, this doesn't mean none is needed. Some say progesterone is the only hormone worth taking whether you have your uterus or not because progesterone is the precursor to estrogen, so taking progesterone is all that's necessary. However, this is not agreed upon, so you should always have your sex hormones tested. Test results will vary according to your cycle, the food you just ate, and so on, but at least you have a ballpark figure. Testing hormones should be ongoing as long as you take HRTs.

Bio-identical progesterone is also available over-the-counter.

DHEA Creams & Suppositories

DHEA (dehydroepiandrosterone), also known as *androstenedione* creams and suppositories also combat menopausal symptoms, such as vaginal dryness and atrophy. DHEA is a steroid hormone made from cholesterol that circulates in the body abundantly. When DHEA is delivered vaginally, it goes to work to produce other sex hormones as needed. *Prasterone* is an example of an over-the-counter product. As a warning, some DHEA products contain alcohol, which can irritate and sting vaginal tissues that are inflamed.

NOTE: While bio-identical hormones are considered natural, it doesn't mean there can't be adverse side effects. Some studies show that topical bio-identical hormones can cause the same long-term adverse side effects as synthetic, oral HRTs. Generally speaking, HRTs (both types) have far fewer potential side effects when used intravaginally, so doctors prescribe vaginal creams to women when oral hormones could be harmful. When used vaginally, very little of the hormone crosses over into the bloodstream. Still, some do, and you need to be aware of the symptoms.

- Headache
- Sore throat
- Mood changes
- Indigestion
- Nausea
- Leg cramps
- Breast pings, aches, tenderness
- Feeling sick (general malaise)
- A burning sensation in or around the vagina or pelvic area, which may not be a reaction to the hormone but the ingredients in the product

First Things First, Your Diet

The body still operates the way it did some 50,000 years ago. Modern-age stresses, chemicals, preservatives, and fast foods all affect hormone levels, and some of us have never been hormonally balanced because of it. Processed and packaged foods confuse the natural function of hormones.

Foods That Effect Hormones

Hormones are also found in meat and dairy products. The overabundance of pesticides, antibiotics, and hormones in meats and dairy cause you harm. Hence, it is essential that your animal protein sources, and dairy from them, be from the wild, grass-fed, and free-range animal and poultry sources.

Certain foods contain phytoestrogens, which are natural stand-ins for estrogens. Phytoestrogens bind to estrogen receptors, potentially blocking excess estrogen or quieting the need for estrogen when the estrogen is low. You can reduce PMS symptoms in perimenopause and menopause by eating less of those foods containing phytoestrogens. However, the idea isn't to use these foods in excess but to balance hormones naturally. Excessive consumption of phytoestrogens may increase the chances of migraine headaches.

Also, if you have had cancer, have cancer, or have a risk for cancer, please speak to your care provider before consuming foods rich in phytoestrogens. Increased estrogen levels have been associated with a greater risk for cancer and escalated tumor growth.

As it turns out, the ovaries need iodine just as the thyroid gland does. Eating seaweed, such as Kelp, can help you to maintain healthy levels of iodine. Of course, if you have thyroid problems, doing so can worsen your thyroid symptoms.

Foods Containing Phytoestrogens

The foods listed below contain phytoestrogens. The names of foods highlighted in **bold** letters are better at balancing whatever sex hormone imbalances you have.

- **Fruits:** **Grapes**, **Pears**, Plums, Pineapple, Papaya, Pomegranates, Dates, Raspberries, Apples, Cherries, Apricots
- **Vegetables:** **Sprouts (all)**, Beets, **Cabbage (raw)**, Yellow string beans, Cucumber, Clover, Brussels, Garlic, Rhubarb, Peppers, Sweet potato, Potatoes, Pumpkin, **Yams**, Squash, **Tomatoes**, Carrots, Eggplant
- **Grains:** Barley, **Millet**, Rye, and rye bran, **Lentils** (pea pods), Oats, Navy beans, Garbanzo beans, Red beans, Black-eyed peas, Soybeans, Chickpea, Pinto beans, Haricot beans, Whole wheat, brown or wild rice, **cereal bran**
- **Other:** Olives and olive oil, Baker's yeast, Eggs
- **Herbs:** Hops, Licorice, Sage, Parsley
- **Seeds & Oils:** **Flaxseed (ground)**, Sesame seeds, Anise seed, Peanuts, Sesame seed, Sunflower seeds, **Fennel seed**

NOTE: Flaxseed improves the function of your liver and helps to moisturize dry skin, hair, and nails. It alleviates some allergies, eases depression, improves energy, lowers LDL cholesterol by 18%, and encourages weight loss. It also decreases the risk of heart disease and some cancers. However, you must grind your flaxseed and consume one tablespoon per day to receive its benefits or consume two tablespoons of flaxseed oil per day. A small coffee grinder will do for grinding. For the sake of freshness, grind only the amount you need. When living with HSV, you'll want to limit your flaxseed intake as it is incredibly high in the amino acid arginine, which feeds the herpes virus. Or you can supplement with the amino acid, L-Lysine, on days you consume flaxseed to counteract the effects.

Foods Better At Inhibiting Estrogen

Except for the foods listed above under *Foods Containing Phytoestrogens*, foods better at inhibiting estrogen are berries, citrus foods, green beans, broccoli, corn, melons, buckwheat, figs, onions, tapioca, white rice, white flour, and all fruits.

The Soy Controversy

Soy contains estrogen-like properties (isoflavones). Soy is reportedly safer than taking *Black Cohosh*, as long as you are not allergic to it. Studies show that soy does not affect flushing and sweats, but it does help balance hormones in general. Soy sauce, tofu, and miso are popular soy choices. Unfortunately, western women are not physically capable of breaking down soy into useable nutrients, and soy may cause "fuzzy" thinking in some who have food sensitivities.

There is concern over soy being too high in fat and even more concern over how it is processed. Still, it is a good source of protein and, therefore, an advantage for vegetarian diets. Soy is listed in some reports as food that deposits acid waste in the body, raising blood acid levels and creating poor pH. However, others say that this is not so as long as it is fermented.

When using soy supplements, limit your combined daily sources of soy to no more than 40 mg divided throughout the day.

Coffee & Menopause

There is a positive side to drinking coffee. It helps to reduce the risk of *Parkinson's* and *Alzheimer's*. However, caffeine is a diuretic, and being dehydrated causes calcium loss, which causes osteoporosis. In addition, it seriously upsets hormone balance, especially insulin levels, causing blood sugar problems. Stay under two 8-ounce beverages containing caffeine daily. Use 2% milk and no white sugar in your coffee (or tea). Make sure you're getting your B vitamins and some extra calcium and water.

Have Some Cheese With That Wine

If you like to have an occasional alcoholic beverage, stick with red wine, particularly *Pinot Noir*, which contains a high amount of *resveratrol*, an antioxidant that protects the heart. Resveratrol is also found in the skin of grapes. Limit wine consumption to two drinks per day. Have a hard cheese snack with your wine. The protein will keep your blood sugar balanced.

NOTE: Wine and cheese together can trigger mast cell activation in those with *Histamine Intolerance*.

Avoid the Following Food Additives

- *Acesulfame-K* is a sweetener that has not been tested all that much, with some studies showing the additive may cause cancer in rats. *Aspartame*, better known as *Equal* and *Nutra-Sweet*, causes cancer, and neurological disorders, such as dizziness and hallucinations.
- Both BHA (*Butylated hydroxyanisole*) and BHT (*Butylated hydroxytoluene*) are preservatives that form potentially cancer-causing compounds in your body.
- *Food Colors*: Blue #1 and #2, Red #3, Green #3, and Yellow #6 are linked to bladder cancer, thyroid cancer, and tumors of the adrenal glands and the kidneys.
- *Olestra* is a synthetic fat linked to severe diarrhea, abdominal cramps, and gas. Olestra also inhibits vitamin absorption from fruits and vegetables.
- *Potassium bromate* causes cancer.
- *Monosodium glutamate* (MSG) is an amino acid used as a preservative and causes headaches, nausea, and damage to nerve cells in rats.

- *Propyl gallate* is a preservative with links to cancer in animal studies.
- *Sodium chloride* (ordinary table salt) is linked to high blood pressure, heart attack, stroke, and kidney failure. Use sea salt.
- *Sodium nitrate* (or Nitrite) is a preservative linked to cancer.
- *Trans fats* cause heart disease.
- *White sugar* promotes poor nutrition, hypoglycemia, and diabetes.

Hormone Balancing Diet Tips

- Avoid trans-fats. Eat natural oils, such as real butter, extra virgin olive oil, and other cold-pressed oils.
- Eat whole, unprocessed foods, such as fresh fruit and vegetables, whole grains, nuts, and seeds.
- Don't overdo on fruit (full of sugar).
- Use rice milk or Goat's milk. Limit yogurt, but use only plain, organic yogurt.
- Eat more wild and deep-sea fish, flaxseed (not in excess), or krill oil (for omega-3s).
- Choose meats from animals that have been grass (organically) fed or raised free-range.

- Grind some psyllium or flaxseeds and toss them into recipes for more fiber. You'll need to grind your flaxseeds for them to be of any benefit. So that you know, flaxseeds are high in arginine, which feeds the herpes virus.

Supplements for Navigating Menopause

Take a “whole-food” daily multivitamin and mineral supplement and not synthetic vitamins. Whole-food vitamins and minerals will say as much on the label. You must get enough of the following vitamins:

Vitamin A, no less than 2500 - 5000 IU, no more than 8000 IU per day. (Vitamin A can build up and become toxic in the body).

Vitamin C, at least 500-1000 mg per day, in a buffered form. Divide this into three doses of 400 mg per day. If you suffer from stress syndromes, you can take more. Cut back as you feel better. Indicators of deficiency are bleeding gums, bruising and slow wound healing, diabetes, and reoccurring infections.

Vitamin E (d-alpha-tocopherol), at least 400 IU per day, no more than 800 IU per day. Once you feel balanced, stick with only 400 units. Indicators for deficiency are muscle weakness, diabetes, acne, angina (heart pain), hot flashes, heart disease, tender breasts, and arthritis. Vitamin E also aids in cancer prevention.

B-Vitamins, particularly B-6 (pyridoxine) 25-100 mg per day and B-12. You might take a high potency B complex (50-100 mg complex) until you feel balanced. Reduce to no less than 4 mg of B-6 per day and no less than 400-800 mcg of B-12 per day. Other B vitamins requirements each day: B-1 (thiamine) 10-100 mg, B-2 (riboflavin) 10-50 mg, B-3 (niacin) 10-100 mg, B-5 (pantothenic acid) 25-100 mg. Indicators of B Vitamin deficiency are fatigue, water retention, mood swings, canker sores, frequent cold sores or genital herpes breakouts, elevated cholesterol, and cardiovascular markers.

Calcium, 1000-1200 mg per day in 600 mg doses. Works synergistically with magnesium, zinc, and vitamin D. Take separately from your other vitamins for at least an hour or two. For every caffeinated coffee, tea, or cola you drink, add an extra 20 mg of calcium. Indications of deficiency are muscle cramps and aches, joint pain, osteoporosis, diabetes, migraines, high blood pressure, and insomnia.

Take **Magnesium** citrate or gluconate, no less than 400 mg. However much calcium you are taking, you should take a third as much magnesium. Do not take more than 1000 mg of magnesium per day. Once hormones are balanced, you can stop taking the extra amount. Magnesium at higher levels can cause loose stool. Indications of deficiency are muscle weakness, spasms and soreness, insomnia and fatigue, irritability, heart palpitations and anxiety, irregular heartbeat, high blood pressure, fibromyalgia, a sweet tooth, kidney stones, fatigue, and osteoporosis. If you have MS, Fibromyalgia, or Irritable Bowel Syndrome, use *magnesium lactate*, which is more easily absorbed by sensitive systems.

Vitamin D, 200-400 IU per day (if you are over 60, use 600 IU). Vitamin D turns estradiol back into estrone, a weaker estrogen, which can help your body regulate estrogen output according to its need. You can get vitamin D from being in the sun for 20 minutes 3 x per week, but only from April 15th through October 1st. The rest of the year, the sun is too far away.

Folate. It decreases cancer risk by 60%. You have four kinds of cells in your body; A, C, G, and T cells. T cells prevent misduplication (wrong making) of cells. Take no less than 400 mcg per day and up to 800 mcg.

Omega 3 Essential Fatty Acids are essential supplements to consider taking unless you already eat fish 2-3 times per week, which should contain sufficient amounts. Essential fatty acids are necessary for bone and brain health. They improve calcium absorption, increase calcium deposits in the bones, and reduce calcium excretion from your bones. They also decrease pain. Walnuts, fish oil, and krill oil are all high in omega 3s. Krill oil is also full of antioxidants. Or, you can use flaxseed oil if a "fishy" taste bothers you or you are allergic to seafood. So that you know, you must crush flaxseed for it to be of any benefit. It's also important to note that flaxseed does not work for pain as omega3 fish oil does. Walnuts and flaxseeds are incredibly high in *arginine*, an amino acid that feeds the herpes virus. If you live with cold sores or genital herpes, go with fish or krill oil.

Zinc, a combined 15-30 mg each day from food and supplement choices. You can take up to 50 mg if you suffer from a virus, but only temporarily.

Selenium, 200 mcg per day. Selenium guards against breast and colon cancer in women and prostate cancer in men. Selenium also causes HSV to remain dormant.

Also, **Copper**, 1-2 mg, **Manganese**, 5-15 mg, **Molybdenum**, 10-25 mg, **Boron**, 1-3 mg, **Silica**, 1-20 mg, **Vanadium**, 50-100 mcg, **Inositol**, 10-100 mg, **Choline**, 10-100 mg

Worthwhile Supplements to Consider, But Not Completely Necessary

- **Quercetin**, found in green tea, red wine, apples, berries, cabbage, onions, broccoli, cauliflower, turnips, Ginkgo Biloba, and St. John's Wort, reduces the risk of some cancers (especially stomach) and helps with asthma. If you cannot take quercetin due to taking prescribed medications, you might take **CoQ10** (30-50 mg per day). Take 100-300 mg per day of CoQ10 if you already have heart disease. However, always consult with your doctor before taking any new supplement. I talk more about quercetin in [Colds, Flu & COVID-19](#).
- **L-Carnitine** helps the heart use up fat for fuel and is beneficial for high triglycerides (fat in blood cells) and angina (heart pain). Take 250-500 mg daily. Take 1500-3000 mg per day if you have heart problems already. Again, always consult with your doctor before taking or changing the dose of any supplement.
- **Iron**. Do not take a supplement that contains more than 10 mg of iron unless directed by your physician. Iron can build up in the body and become toxic. Postmenopausal women no longer having periods are at the highest risk for this. If you no longer have periods, do not take iron unless advised by your physician. Please have your blood tested if you feel you have reasons for taking iron supplements.

Unnecessary Supplements, Unless Otherwise Directed by Your Physician

Chromium and **potassium**. Both are found in sufficient quantities in a healthy diet and do not need to be supplemented unless you are athletic and risk losing significant amounts of water through sweat. Chromium is touted to help relieve blood sugar imbalances by assisting with glucose's proper transport and metabolism within cells. Your physician should monitor dosages. Chromium is often one of the key ingredients in energy drinks. However, it can be a problem for diabetes and hypoglycemic individuals, dangerously lowering blood sugar levels.

Gained a Little Weight Lately Around Your Middle?

Hormones manage your weight, along with your gut microbiome. Insulin is a primary hormone affected by the balance of other essential hormones and can cause fat buildup in the waistline area.

Hot Flashes, Flushes, Night Sweats & Vaginal Complaints

Hot flashes at night are called night sweats. Night sweats can initiate anxiety attacks. If this has ever happened to you, you know what it is like to be suddenly yanked awake by “who knows what” and left hot, sweaty, trembling, and fearful. Waking up and feeling as if you are “unable to move” may also be part of this equation. This feeling is related to a stress response triggered by natural chemicals in your body. It will pass shortly. After the hot flash waves through, the cold chills arrive. Lucky you!

Another cause of hot flashes is the *Central Nervous System* notifying the brain that your muscles need more energy. The following is a scientific explanation of the physiology of a hot flash, which is controlled by the adrenal glands. I apologize for not remembering where I read it.

"Hot flashes are due to the hypothalamic response to declining ovarian estrogen production. Declining estrogen induces hypophysiotropic neurons in the arcuate nucleus of the hypothalamus to release gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) in a pulsatile fashion, which in turn stimulates the release of luteinizing hormone (LH). Extremely high pulses of LH occur during the period of declining estrogen production. The LH has vasodilatory effects, which leads to flushing."

Anything which makes the body too acidic can cause hot flashes and night sweats,

- Acidic foods
- White sugar
- Excessive heat
- Unexpressed stress, fear, anger
- Hydrogenated or saturated fats
- Intense exercise or sexual activities
- Caffeinated drinks, chocolate, tea, coffee, cola
- Cayenne, black pepper, ginger, and other hot or spicy foods and herbs
- Tobacco
- Marijuana

The following can help to cool hot flashes and night sweats.

Vitamin E (no more than 400 IU per day) taken in the afternoon will help you through the night and the following morning when night sweats can disturb sleep. Vitamin E may conflict with certain medications, especially for the heart.

Black Cohosh (not *Blue Cohosh*) for up to six months, at 40 mg per day or as directed on the bottle or by your doctor. Black cohosh has no side effects beyond occasional mild stomach discomfort for most individuals. Still, it seems somewhat “iffy” to me. Recent studies performed by Kaiser Permanente have revealed that black cohosh works no better than a placebo. However, some women swear by it. Black cohosh is also believed to have pretty good results in reducing the symptoms of vaginitis and related imbalances. Don't take black cohosh if you have high blood pressure or take high blood pressure medication to avoid an unsafe drop in blood pressure.

Sage can be taken as a tea for hot flashes and night sweats. Use 1/2 teaspoon of dried leaf in 1 cup of boiling water (steeped 5-7 minutes), up to 3 times per day. It works right away, so you can use it when you need to. For added sweetness, add a touch of honey or *Stevia*.

Leave **Motherwort** extract and a glass of water on your nightstand. If you are awakened with night sweats, place drops on your tongue and swallow with water. Use the dosage as directed on the label.

Place a few drops of **Basil** or **Thyme** essential oil on a handkerchief or a cotton ball. Place in a zip-lock sandwich bag. Open and inhale when a hot flash strikes.

Findings are mixed for **Chaste Berry** (*Vitex, Chastetree*), which affects the pituitary function and is reported to regulate hot flashes and dizziness. It is used for PMS and tender breasts, but it can raise or lower your libido (sex drive), depending on your chemistry. Chaste Berry lacks phytosterols, which makes it a slow-acting tonic, and, for this reason, it requires at least a year's commitment, even though you might see positive results within three months. You can't use Chate Berry with dopamine antagonists because it increases dopamine levels in the brain. Unless you have painful periods, intense PMS symptoms, or a tendency for heavy or prolonged bleeding, there is no good reason to rush and add Chaste Berry to your regimen. Still, it may be helpful. You can mix Powdered Chaste Berry into smoothies.

Drink 6-8 cups of **water** to make up for sweating.

Increase your **salt** intake if you sweat often or a lot, but don't overdo them.

Dress in layers to strip out of some in a hurry. Wear a tank top rather than a T-shirt or long sleeve pajamas at night.

Keep a little **spray bottle of water** and a **small fan** on the bedside nightstand or the car. Keep the air vents directed at your body and turn the fan (or air) on high after misting. Have water available to drink as well.

Wear **flip-flops** instead of shoes when driving, especially when going long distances.

Because caffeine and hot beverages are stimulating, they cause hot flashes within moments of consuming them. Don't drink caffeine or hot drinks within two hours of bedtime. Alcohol and a full stomach also disturb sleep.

Keep your bedroom cool. Use light-weight blankets on your bed. Use a down comforter or something similar that feels cool to the touch on its outer layer, which is excellent for putting your feet against during a hot spell.

Vaginal Dryness & Atrophy: A Common Menopausal Complaint

If you have tried all else and have been diagnosed with vaginal atrophy (thinning of vaginal skin), you might wish to talk to your doctor about an HRT vaginal cream. At first, the cream may seep a little through the vaginal barrier into the bloodstream, causing a rise in overall estrogen levels. Once the vaginal wall begins to heal and thicken, this should decrease or even stop altogether. The process can take a few short weeks. So that you are aware, hormone replacement has not always been proven to help with vaginal atrophy. Some women are sensitive to vaginal hormone creams and may experience even more sensitivity or swelling. The following are signs and symptoms of vaginal problems.

- Irritation, burning, rawness, or red areas or spots near the vaginal entrance that hurt when washing, sitting, or bending over
- Vaginal dryness, pain, or slight bleeding during intercourse
- Discharge (can be thin, mucus colored, sticks and dries in the pubic hair, with fishy odor or no odor).
- UTIs (urinary tract infections), bladder infections, *Interstitial Cystitis*, or having bladder urgency, incontinence, or frequent urination at night
- Hive-like lumps under the skin of the labia that itch and stick around temporarily

Even before menopause takes place, changes take place in the vagina. 40% of all menopausal women have problems with vaginal bacterial overgrowths causing vaginitis or vaginosis. Infections can come and go or decide to stay during perimenopause when hormone levels dip and dive. Vaginal dryness and

atrophy are also common complaints. There are natural alternatives for relieving vaginal dryness and atrophy. I've listed some for you below. Always check with your doctor before trying anything new.

Holistic Alternatives for Vaginal Dryness & Atrophy

Vaginal mucus and fluids are regulated by **calcium** (1000 mg daily). Vitamin D3 and K2 (combo) promote the uptake of calcium. You should take half as much **magnesium** (500 mg) as calcium.

Sea Buckthorn Oil, derived from a berry fruit, is a traditional medicine used in Asia for thousands of years, which contains omega 3, 5, 6, 7, and 9. It also contains vitamins A, B, C, E, K, and P. Studies prove that 3000 mg taken for three months (or 1.5 mg 2 x daily) can restore vaginal tissue integrity. The seeds of the berry contain omega 7 (*Palmitic Acid*, found in anchovies, blue-green algae, Macadamia nuts, avocado, and olive oil), which specifically ease vaginal atrophy within six weeks. It also alleviated the dryness associated with *Sjogren's Syndrome* (dry mucus membranes) and relieved symptoms of dry mouth within four weeks. The dosage can be reduced at the end of three months to 350-1000 mg to maintain vaginal health or stopped altogether and resumed at a later date, if necessary. There are very few to no side effects to consuming this berry fruit. Sea Buckthorn oil also eases digestive upsets. You can also prick open a gel cap and apply the contents to herpes lesions to speed healing.

Evening Primrose Oil (*Oenothera biennes* and *Oenothera lamarkckiana*) contains GLA (a fatty acid), which helps alleviate vaginal atrophy and vaginal dryness, and is high in omega 6. Low GLA is often caused by viral infections, such as Herpes Simplex Virus.

Take **probiotics** that benefit the vaginal microbiome (*L. acidophilus*, *L. rhamnosus*, and *L. Reuteri*). Look for products that contain **prebiotics** to feed your probiotics or buy a separate prebiotic. If you have *Histamine Intolerance*, you'll want to make sure you don't take certain strains of probiotics. I reveal them [here](#).

Black Cohosh, Saint John's Wort, Borage, and Vitamin D have been used in the past.

Over-the-counter **bio-identical estrogen** and **progesterone** creams or gels

You might also try an over-the-counter **vaginal lubricant**, such as *Replens*. However, Replens contains *glycerin*, a sugar alcohol that dries out vaginal tissues in the long run. Avoid mineral oil, which

can cause a vaginal infection. Natural and safe lubricants are *Avocado* and *Olive* oils. I don't suggest Coconut oil because it absorbs too quickly and has been known to cause UTIs in some women. These oils can deteriorate condoms. If you're using a condom, use plain glycerin or *K-Y Gel*, as long as you're not raw or irritated (or it can burn).

Psssst! A Little Sex Talk

According to *Masters & Johnson*, having intercourse at least once or twice per week will help the vagina maintain natural lubrication. Even if you have been celibate for a while, the vagina will regain its production of mucus secretion and maintain muscle tone under normal circumstances. Satisfying yourself helps in the same way. However, when hormones are imbalanced, as they are during menopause, no amount of sexual intercourse will correct this imbalance, nor should you try having intercourse until you are healed.

You and your partner may want to experiment with a vaginal lubricant or alternative methods for satisfying each other sexually while you are recovering instead. So that you know, if you still have all of your female parts and have been fertile, you can still get pregnant for up to one year after your periods cease.

If you decide to use an HRT, avoid sharing it with your partner through bodily contact. If they absorb your cream, it can create adverse side effects. Try placing your hormone cream in an area where your partner won't come into contact with it, such as the underside of the arches of your feet.

Incontinence

During menopause, changes occur in the bladder as well as the vagina. The lining between the vagina and the bladder grows thinner due to hormones declining. There's not as much natural cushioning. As a result, the urethra is looser than it used to be (like a balloon that's been blown up multiple times and is now lax and wrinkled), and urine can pool inside of it, which can be the cause of urine trickling down your leg after you stand up from the toilet. It is also why you can't hold it like you used to.

Sexual activities can aggravate the bladder and leave you feeling the urge to urinate when you don't have to. Before sexual activities, make sure you empty your bladder and use a lubricant if you have problems with vaginal dryness. Relieve your bladder as soon as you can after engaging in sexual play. Hormonal changes can lead to more frequent urination, especially at night.

To strengthen the vagina and the bladder, perform *Kegel* exercises throughout the day by contracting your bladder muscles as if you are trying to pull your vagina up to your navel or cutting off urine flow. Then, gently squeeze, release, squeeze, squeeze, and release. That's it. Start with just a few squeezes three or four times a day and work up from there.

Dizziness & Feeling Off-Balance

Women going through menopause frequently feel dizzy and off-balance due to fluctuating hormones. They have reported experiencing panic attacks and agoraphobia (fear of being in public) for fear of falling or embarrassing themselves. Dizziness and feeling off-balance can also be symptoms of other disorders, such as digestive upset, blood pressure issues, *Tinnitus* or *Meniere's Disease*, *Multiple Sclerosis (MS)*, and muscle tension. If this continues, please have your care provider rule out anything serious.

Heart Palpitations

Heart palpitations (fluttery, racing, or thudding) sensations can be scary. Although heart palpitations are not considered dangerous, check with your doctor to make sure nothing is more serious. Sometimes, it's simply a matter of drinking more water to stay hydrated.

The herb **Hawthorn** has been used for centuries in Europe to calm the nervous system. It is safe to use long-term, but please check with your care provider if you use any heart medication.

Magnesium calms the muscles and encourages proper heart rhythm. Calcium and magnesium work synergistically, so make sure you are getting both. Also, make sure you are eating enough essential fatty acids.

A deficiency in **B vitamins** can cause heart palpitations. Take a B complex or a multivitamin containing more than just one or two B vitamins.

Arthritic Conditions or Chronic Pain

If you're experiencing arthritic conditions or chronic pain, you may be deficient in Calcium, Magnesium, or Vitamin D. Calcium and magnesium work together to balance pH and relax muscles. Calcium also supports healthy hormones, teeth, and bones, and caffeine in coffee, tea, and soda leeches calcium from your bones.

Bones need vitamin D to absorb calcium. I suggest calcium citrate, which is broken down easier by the body and doesn't interfere with iron absorption. Calcium citrate also binds with oxalates in the intestine, thereby decreasing the chance of kidney stone formation. Take calcium with your meals to further improve absorption. If you are prone to kidney stones, try getting your calcium needs only from foods.

- Goat milk, yogurt, cheese, and all-natural ice cream
- Canned salmon, sardines, and Albacore tuna (with bones is best)
- Bok choy, spinach, kale, collard greens, broccoli, seaweed
- Dandelion greens, romaine, and head lettuce,
- Soy, soy milk, soy sprouts, tofu made with calcium sulfate (soy products are not for everyone)
- Mung and alfalfa sprouts
- Navy, pinto, garbanzo, lima, black, and split peas,
- Oranges
- Parsley
- Brown rice (has a little calcium)

NOTE: Water hydrates. Dehydration is the number one cause of arthritic conditions.

Bone Density Testing

The National Osteoporosis Foundation recommends bone testing with special X-rays or an ultrasound device. A bone density test is painless. If you are 65 or older (especially with risk factors), postmenopausal with a fracture, thinking about treatment for osteoporosis, or have been on hormone replacement therapy for a long time, talk to your doctor about getting tested. Your BMD (bone mineral density) describes the thickness of the scanned bone. The result is called a T-Score. The following should help you understand your results.

- Normal Bone Mass: Above -1
- Osteopenia: 1 to - 2.5 (may need treatment)
- Osteoporosis: Below - 2.5

NOTE: You've probably heard that red meat and dairy contribute to osteoporosis more than any other factor because they suck calcium right out of your bones. But did you also know that your favorite soda, if carbonated, contains phosphate? Calcium and phosphate have to have balance in the body. So if there is more phosphate in your body than calcium, your body will remove calcium from bone to restore balance in the rest of the body.

Exercise to Relax

During the menopausal stages, focusing on exercising to relax is a priority. Keeping muscles toned is an added benefit, but your focus should be on relaxing (stretches, breathing) rather than working hard. Exercise also decreases hot flashes by reducing the amount of circulating LH and FSH hormones. It also raises your level of endorphins ("feel good" chemicals in the brain), which drop significantly during hot flashes.

Indigestion, Heartburn & Acid Reflux

Purchase some over-the-counter dietary enzyme supplements. Your enzyme supplements should contain protease, cellulase, amylase, and lipase. If the problem is not having the necessary digestive enzymes in your gut to break down your carbohydrates, proteins, and fats, they'll relieve you of your symptoms. For long-term use, choose a multi-enzyme that does not contain peppermint. *Peppermint* relaxes the muscle at the upper end of the stomach that keeps foods from entering the esophagus and defeats the purpose.

Also, losing excess weight and flab, especially around the middle, will help keep acid in your stomach and not in your esophagus. You can also raise the head of your bed with blocks or sleep a little more upright on a pillow. Sixteen studies have proven that weight loss and raising the head of your bed are the best methods for reducing heartburn. Persistent problems could be a sign of more dramatic health issues.

Dry Skin, Hair & Nails

Because of the changes in your hormones, your hair, skin, and nails can dry out and become a source of frustration and embarrassment. There's nothing worse than slathering on lotion just to look down and see ashy legs and dry cuticles again within minutes. And watching your hair go down the drain can be an emotionally painful experience.

- Stay away from any general run-of-the-mill over-the-counter products. They won't help you and are not suitable for you anyway.
- Take your vitamins, especially B vitamins, omegas (or eat fish 2-3 times each week), and silica to get some "good" oil back into your skin.
- Drink one glass of pure water every 2-3 hours to keep skin moisture replenished.
- Synthetic hormones are known to cause hair loss. As far as I know, bio-identical hormones do not.

- The thyroid gland is a significant regulator of crucial hormones. If it isn't working right, you'll experience more problems during menopause, including dryness.
- Take multi-enzymes if you feel you have digestive problems. Not being able to digest your food means you are not getting the nutrients you need. Hair loss may be a sign of this.

Mental Sluggishness

Not remembering your pet's name, phone number, or what day it is can be unnerving when it happens too often. Menopause can cause fuzzy thinking. Food sensitivities may be to blame, especially sensitivities to wheat (gluten), cow's milk, sugar, citrus fruit, chocolate, peanuts, and soy. Eat live foods containing vitamins B-6, B-12, folic acid, and essential fatty acids, exercise regularly, and sleep at the same time each night for 7-10 hours. Learn something new. Studies now prove that learning new things can stimulate the growth of brain cells. So does exercise.

Depression & Emotional Numbness

Stress assaults estrogen, which makes for an even worse scenario during menopause, and can make you feel like you no longer exist on the "inside". You might wonder where you went. There is a word for the inability to shake this negative frame of mind. It is *dysphoria*. If you are depressed, it is essential to take action to turn your depression around. It is also necessary to understand depression and feeling numb to life is not all in your mind. It could very well be in your gut. Imbalances in the gut microbiome can lead to depression.

Are You Just Tired or is It Something Else?

Menopause does cause fatigue, due to hormonal changes taking place. However, it could be something else, such as *Hypothyroidism* or *Chronic Fatigue Syndrome*.

Manage the Big Stresses in Life

Commit to being as kind to yourself as you possibly can. Be your own best friend. If a considerable amount of stress is an issue in your life, write down a list of all the things, people, and situations that stress you out. And I mean everything! Then, take another piece of paper and prioritize your list by dividing it into three columns with the following three headings.

- Things I Have *Control Over*
- Things I Have *Some Control Over*
- Things I Have *No Control Over*

Place your stresses in the appropriate columns, which will give you some idea of what causes you the most stress in life and what changes are within your power to exert.

First, begin making changes in the things entirely within your ability to change first. Then work on some of those things you have some power to change. Pray about the rest.

You may find your stressors move into different columns from time to time because menopause is often the time in life when a woman chooses to live a life of greater purpose according to her personal spiritual, emotional, and moral priorities.

You might also want to break down a few stress-easing goals into actionable steps.



Thank you for downloading *The Navigating Menopause Guide*. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marie Joanne' Dionne". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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