

A Natural and Functional Medicine Approach to Menopausal Issues

While menopause will eventually arrive for all women of a certain age, the severity with which it affects each individual can vary widely. For some, menopause simply comes and goes, bringing with it uncomfortable, yet easily bearable symptoms. They laugh and joke about it! For others, menopause can turn one's life entirely upside down, bringing with it incredibly uncomfortable symptoms that affect one both physically and emotionally with great intensity. For these women, menopause can be an extremely scary and mentally exhausting stage of their lives. Fortunately, there is help out there for many while more and more women are turning to natural and safer methods, even beyond the presumed safety of pharmacologic dosing of bio-identical hormone, becoming so popular with modern gynecologists and anti-aging doctors.

Women who seek menopause relief from traditional doctors may receive prescriptions for anti-depressants, sedatives and mild tranquilizers. Additionally there is now the problem of medical doctors prescribing extra-physiologically high doses of bio-identical hormones that are so strong as to have sedating or otherwise undesirable potent effects on the woman. Progesterone dosing is now reaching levels five and ten times what a normal menstruating woman would make naturally. Estrogen is being administered in doses and combinations without regard for adequate protection from its potential threats to the woman. Often, very high doses of testosterone are used. This goes beyond supportive therapy into designer womanhood with the potential for dangerous effects. These methods are typically administered without regard for the underlying basis of unusually difficult menopausal symptoms, which may require investigation of other potential hormonal imbalances, such as sub-clinical hypothyroidism and low adrenal function. These complicating and confounding co-conditions can account may account for the other female hormone relative insufficiencies and may even be tied into other life-style difficulties that may be causing over-whelming stress to the body and brain, and may well need to be discussed and dealt with to solve the real problems. One has to examine the real reasons why the problem exists in the first place. With a good natural and functional medicine workup, a treatment plan is only developed after a period of very carefully listening during the interview of the woman, giving a change for real important issues to surface in the meeting, and then after good testing has been done. Women who experience particularly unpleasant menopause have typically suffered from hormonal imbalances for years, even decades, but were simply not aware of it or were previously seemingly unaffected by it. When the doctor digs through the history listening carefully to the woman and looks carefully for when the first signs of health decline really began and what was going on the the couple of years just prior to the decline, a more realistic clinical picture can be drawn to properly tackle the true problems at hand. This is an approach superior to just manipulating hormone lab values and blocking certain symptoms with heavy handed high dosing of excessive prescription hormones. Sometimes, less is more, and everyone is happier and served better!

Hormone levels can be tested through a woman's saliva, blood, or urine, though one specific test is not generally preferred over any other and they each have their advantages and disadvantages. This lab work is, however, usually very important in determining which hormones are out of balance and what may have led them to fall out of balance in the first place. Adequate time for careful history, time to evaluate good metabolic, hormone, neurotransmitter, nutritional, and lifestyle questionnaires, and time for a good physical exam addressing whole body issues are necessary for optimal care in more cases. Unaddressed thyroid issues, cholesterol levels that are too low (!), high or low and dysfunctional cortisol levels and even just extreme stress for extended periods of time can all cause healthy female hormone levels to fluctuate to abnormal patterns. A good natural and functional medicine evaluation serves to examine a women's entire case history, along with recent test results, to determine likely

causes as well as appropriate therapies, all done without potentially harmful and unnecessary psychoactive prescription drug therapy.

Hormone testing can be a sensitive process, and one that is highly susceptible to inaccurate data if not carried out properly. When it comes to testing female hormones, what time of the day it is, what phase of the cycle it is, and at what stage of menopause a woman is, in can all hugely impact the final testing requests and results. The right functional healthcare doctor knows not only the right times to carry out proper testing, but they also know how to read the results of such testing and formulate effective treatment plans as a result. While this may seem like a long drawn-out process from testing to treatment, it can actually be done relatively quickly, far exceeding the efficiency of the "guess and treat" approach of some doctors, in which it can oftentimes take weeks, and even months, to find a drug and dosage that work, with disappointments along the way. Not getting the problem addressed in a reasonable time can send a woman into despair and she can be lost to help, thinking no one out there care or can help.

Treatment often includes addressing diet and nutrition, as well as exercise and daily activity habits. But, some women are so distressed that the order of help must fit the situation. It's an unfortunate cycle to manage because the hormone estrogen causes the body to hold onto fat, but it is fat that produces the estrogen in the first place. The right diet and proper exercise regimen can help keep both the fat and the estrogen in line, giving the adrenal glands a much needed rest and keeping estrogen and progesterone at their optimal levels. And, because cholesterol is the mother hormone to the sexual and stress hormones, keeping cholesterol levels at a healthy level that is not too low will also contribute to a better general sense of well-being during the menopausal stages.

Because a woman's emotional wellness plays a large role in almost every other area of her life, it's important to address any emotional concerns that come up during menopause as well. Stress makes everything worse, and menopause is certainly no exception. Stress does not just serve to pile up emotional worry in someone's life though, stress actually has well-known documented effects on a person's physical well-being as well. When a person is under extreme stress, the body usually produces an excess of cortisol, also known as the "stress hormone," and disrupts the production of the right hormones, throwing everything out of balance. While traditional doctors might be quick in these instances to prescribe anti-depressants or other symptom reducing medications, this can truly cause more harm than good. A natural and functional medicine approach instead looks at the root of the anxiety and the causes of stress in a person's life, helping to effectively treat the causes, and thus effectively treat the hormonal issues that occur as a result.

If you are a menopausal or pre-menopausal woman experiencing hormonal issues that you would like to discuss with a holistic oriented doctor with a natural and functional medicine background, and trained form the chiropractic model of holistic health, and you are in the Southwest Florida area, then please consider giving Dr. Daniel P. Hillis, D.C., DACACD, of Naples a call. Dr. Hillis believes that only through proper testing and and personal health education can these issues be truly addressed in an effective and comfortable manner.

Menopause may be inevitable, but that doesn't mean that it has to be uncomfortable and unpleasant, so to schedule an appointment with Dr. Hillis, or to simply ask him a question, please contact him today at (239) 597-3929 or visit <http://www.naplesnaturalhealth.com> and book your appointment online.