




Beware of Menopause

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Objectives

- By the end of this session, participants will be able to:
 - Acknowledge the complexities of menopause symptoms and list the most common presenting symptoms
 - Navigate the menopause symptoms to maximize effectiveness of patient encounters
 - Apply a roadmap for unraveling the matrix of menopausal challenges,
 - Systematic way to address physical, cognitive, emotional, social, marital and other symptoms
 - Describe hormonal testing and treatment options
 - Describe non-hormonal treatment options
 - Estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone
 - Hormone testing
 - Hormone treatments



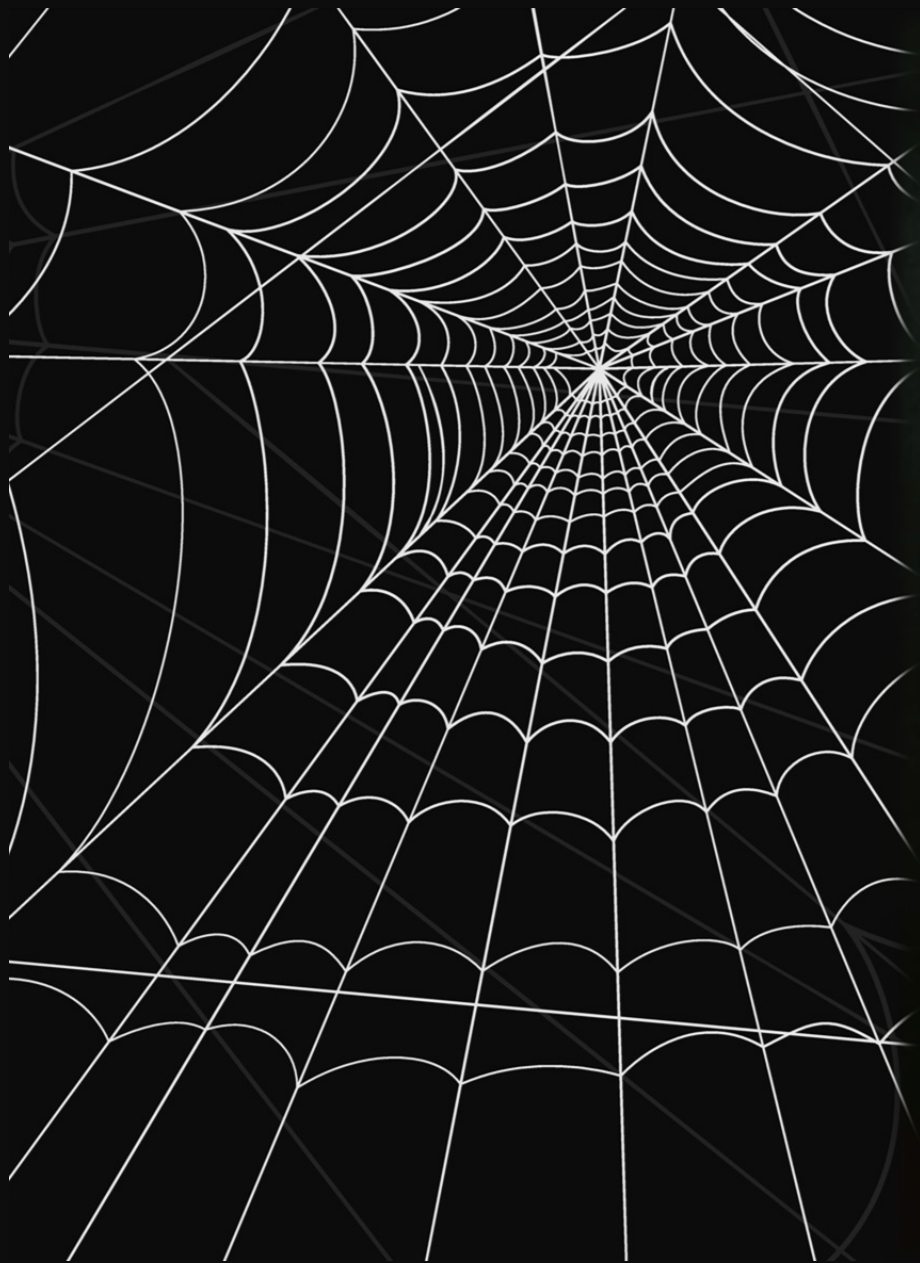
There is a mandate to treat menopausal symptoms

Howard J. 'A national movement': More than a dozen states consider laws around menopause care and training for doctors. *Health*. July 11, 2025

Evidence

- Women on MHT live 3-4 years longer than those not on MHT
- Using MHT prior to age 60 reduces risk of CV disease
- Starting MHT after age 60 is still being investigated
- MHT is potentially risky for those over 60 if they have pre-existing CV disease
- WHI study: 20-year follow-up: women taking estrogen ALONE had a 40% decreased risk of death from breast cancer.
 - When estrogen is taken WITH micronized progesterone, no study establishes increase in breast cancer: small increase with those taking synthetic progestins

What does menopause
look like?





Hot flashes - Night sweats

What does menopause look like?





Decreased Libido
Relationship Difficulties



Irritability
Depression



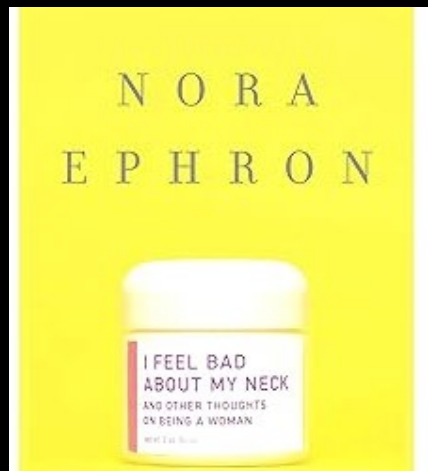
Brain Fog

Cognitive changes





Skin changes
Weight increase



What does menopause look like – to the practitioner?

A spider web is centered on the page, with its spiral extending outwards. The web is composed of many concentric circles and radial lines, creating a complex pattern. The background is a dark, textured grey. The symptoms are listed in various colors: orange, green, purple, blue, and red. The text is arranged in a circular pattern around the center of the web, with some words appearing on the radial lines and others in the spaces between them.

Night sweats

Bladder symptoms

Irritability

Joint pain & stiffness

Mood swings

Mental fog

Hair thinning

Skin changes

Decreased sex drive and response

Hot flashes

Cognitive and memory changes

Frequent vaginal infections

Fatigue

Decreased motivation

Irregular periods

Insomnia

Painful intercourse

Headaches

Body image concerns

Fluid retention

Weight gain/redistribution

Unwanted hair growth

Decreased stamina



<input type="checkbox"/> Irregular periods	<input type="checkbox"/> Hot flashes	<input type="checkbox"/> Night sweats	<input type="checkbox"/> Mood swings	<input type="checkbox"/> Skin hyperpigmentation
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty falling asleep	<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty staying asleep	<input type="checkbox"/> Fatigue	<input type="checkbox"/> Loss of libido	<input type="checkbox"/> Breast size changes
<input type="checkbox"/> Vaginal dryness	<input type="checkbox"/> Weight gain	<input type="checkbox"/> Changes in hair texture	<input type="checkbox"/> Hair loss or thinning	<input type="checkbox"/> Skin thinning
<input type="checkbox"/> Dry skin	<input type="checkbox"/> Breast tenderness	<input type="checkbox"/> Joint pain	<input type="checkbox"/> Muscle aches	<input type="checkbox"/> Loss of skin elasticity
<input type="checkbox"/> Headaches	<input type="checkbox"/> Urinary urgency or incontinence	<input type="checkbox"/> Changes in body odor	<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty concentrating	<input type="checkbox"/> Varicose veins
<input type="checkbox"/> Memory problems	<input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety	<input type="checkbox"/> Depression	<input type="checkbox"/> Irritability	<input type="checkbox"/> Increased acne
<input type="checkbox"/> Heart palpitations	<input type="checkbox"/> Dizziness	<input type="checkbox"/> Bloating	<input type="checkbox"/> Digestive issues	<input type="checkbox"/> Decreased coordination
<input type="checkbox"/> Changes in appetite	<input type="checkbox"/> Allergies or sensitivities	<input type="checkbox"/> Electric shock sensations	<input type="checkbox"/> Tingling extremities	<input type="checkbox"/> Temperature sensitivity
<input type="checkbox"/> Brittle nails	<input type="checkbox"/> Gum problems	<input type="checkbox"/> Osteoporosis or bone density loss	<input type="checkbox"/> Burning mouth syndrome	<input type="checkbox"/> Sleep apnea
<input type="checkbox"/> Altered taste	<input type="checkbox"/> Formication (sensation of insects crawling on the skin)	<input type="checkbox"/> Body aches	<input type="checkbox"/> Increased allergies	<input type="checkbox"/> Changes in sexual response and orgasm intensity
<input type="checkbox"/> Restless legs syndrome (RLS)	<input type="checkbox"/> Changes in vision	<input type="checkbox"/> Ear ringing (tinnitus)	<input type="checkbox"/> Skin itching (pruritus)	<input type="checkbox"/> Increased facial hair
<input type="checkbox"/> Changes in libido sensitivity	<input type="checkbox"/> Increased sensitivity to pain	<input type="checkbox"/> Voice changes	<input type="checkbox"/> Cold flashes	<input type="checkbox"/> Scalp dryness
<input type="checkbox"/> Throat problems	<input type="checkbox"/> Chronic fatigue syndrome	<input type="checkbox"/> Heartburn	<input type="checkbox"/> Changes in sweat patterns	<input type="checkbox"/> Eye dryness
<input type="checkbox"/> Increased thirst	<input type="checkbox"/> Swollen or bleeding gums	<input type="checkbox"/> Hair growth in unusual places	<input type="checkbox"/> Loss of muscle tone	<input type="checkbox"/> Hoarseness or sore throat
<input type="checkbox"/> Hearing problems	<input type="checkbox"/> Increased risk of chronic conditions	<input type="checkbox"/> Changes in dental health	<input type="checkbox"/> Increased frequency of urinary tract infections (UTIs)	<input type="checkbox"/> Painful intercourse
				<input type="checkbox"/> Water retention
				<input type="checkbox"/> Frequent infections
				<input type="checkbox"/> Emotional sensitivity
				<input type="checkbox"/> Chronic inflammation
				<input type="checkbox"/> Lactose intolerance
				<input type="checkbox"/> Cognitive decline
				<input type="checkbox"/> Increased blood pressure
				<input type="checkbox"/> Iron deficiency
				<input type="checkbox"/> Increased cholesterol
				<input type="checkbox"/> Driving anxiety
				<input type="checkbox"/> Sensitive teeth
				<input type="checkbox"/> Skin rashes
				<input type="checkbox"/> Food cravings
				<input type="checkbox"/> Restless sleep
				<input type="checkbox"/> Temperature regulation issues
				<input type="checkbox"/> Nausea
				<input type="checkbox"/> Swollen lymph nodes
				<input type="checkbox"/> Decreased motivation
				<input type="checkbox"/> Sensitivity to light
				<input type="checkbox"/> Blood sugar fluctuations
				<input type="checkbox"/> General malaise
				<input type="checkbox"/> Increased mucus production
				<input type="checkbox"/> Frozen shoulder
				<input type="checkbox"/> Hip pain
				<input type="checkbox"/> Knee pain
				<input type="checkbox"/> Fat redistribution
				<input type="checkbox"/> GERD
				<input type="checkbox"/> Thinning eyebrows
				<input type="checkbox"/> Chronic sinusitis
				<input type="checkbox"/> Changes in nail texture
				<input type="checkbox"/> Hemorrhoids
				<input type="checkbox"/> Increased sweating
				<input type="checkbox"/> Fluid retention
				<input type="checkbox"/> Chest pain
				<input type="checkbox"/> Back pain
				<input type="checkbox"/> Chronic constipation
				<input type="checkbox"/> Bacterial vaginosis
				<input type="checkbox"/> Cold hands and feet
				<input type="checkbox"/> Skin tags
				<input type="checkbox"/> Lower back pain
				<input type="checkbox"/> Worsening of existing autoimmune conditions
				<input type="checkbox"/> Sudden onset of allergies
				<input type="checkbox"/> Eye floaters
				<input type="checkbox"/> Dry mouth
				<input type="checkbox"/> Changes in sense of smell



Menopause management – NOT for the faint of heart

What is the difference?

- Perimenopause
- Menopause
- Post-menopause

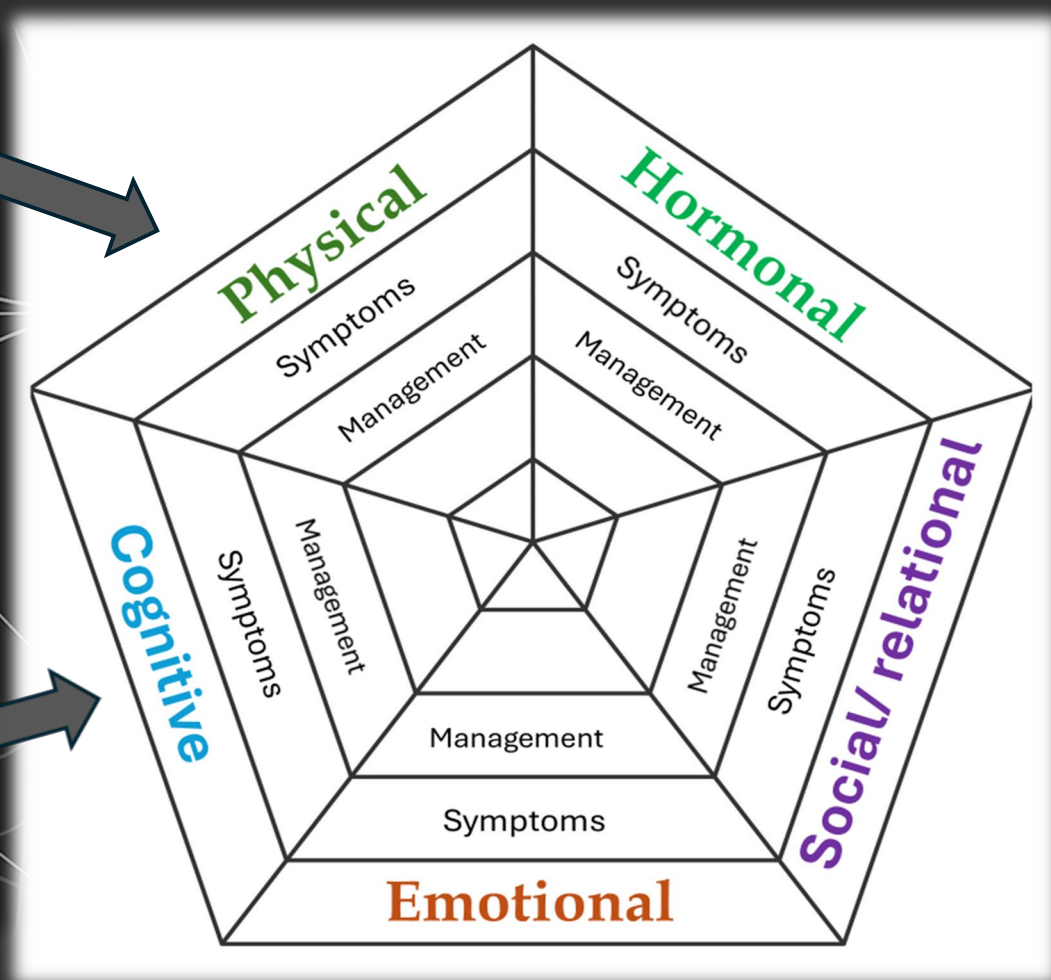
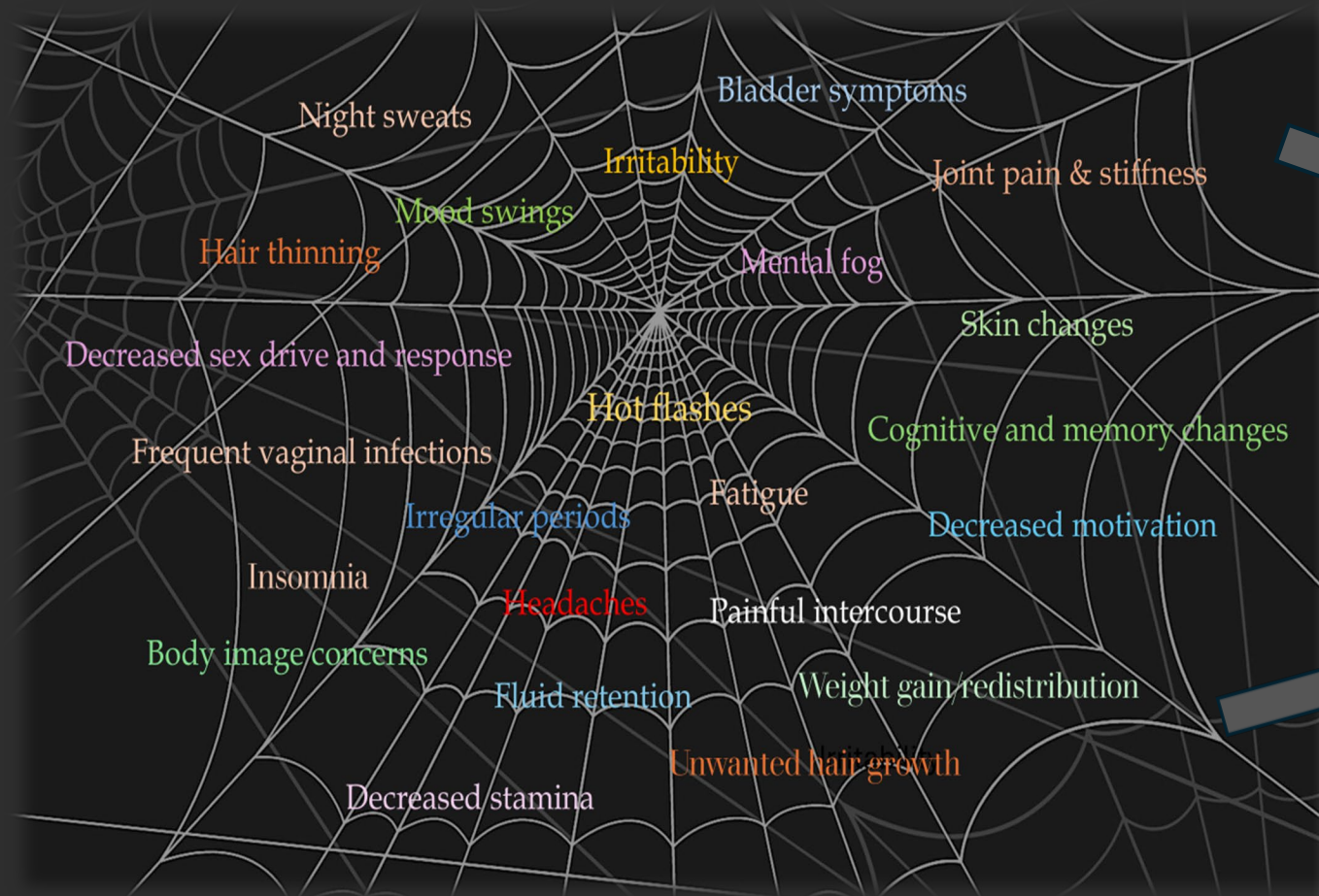
Terminology

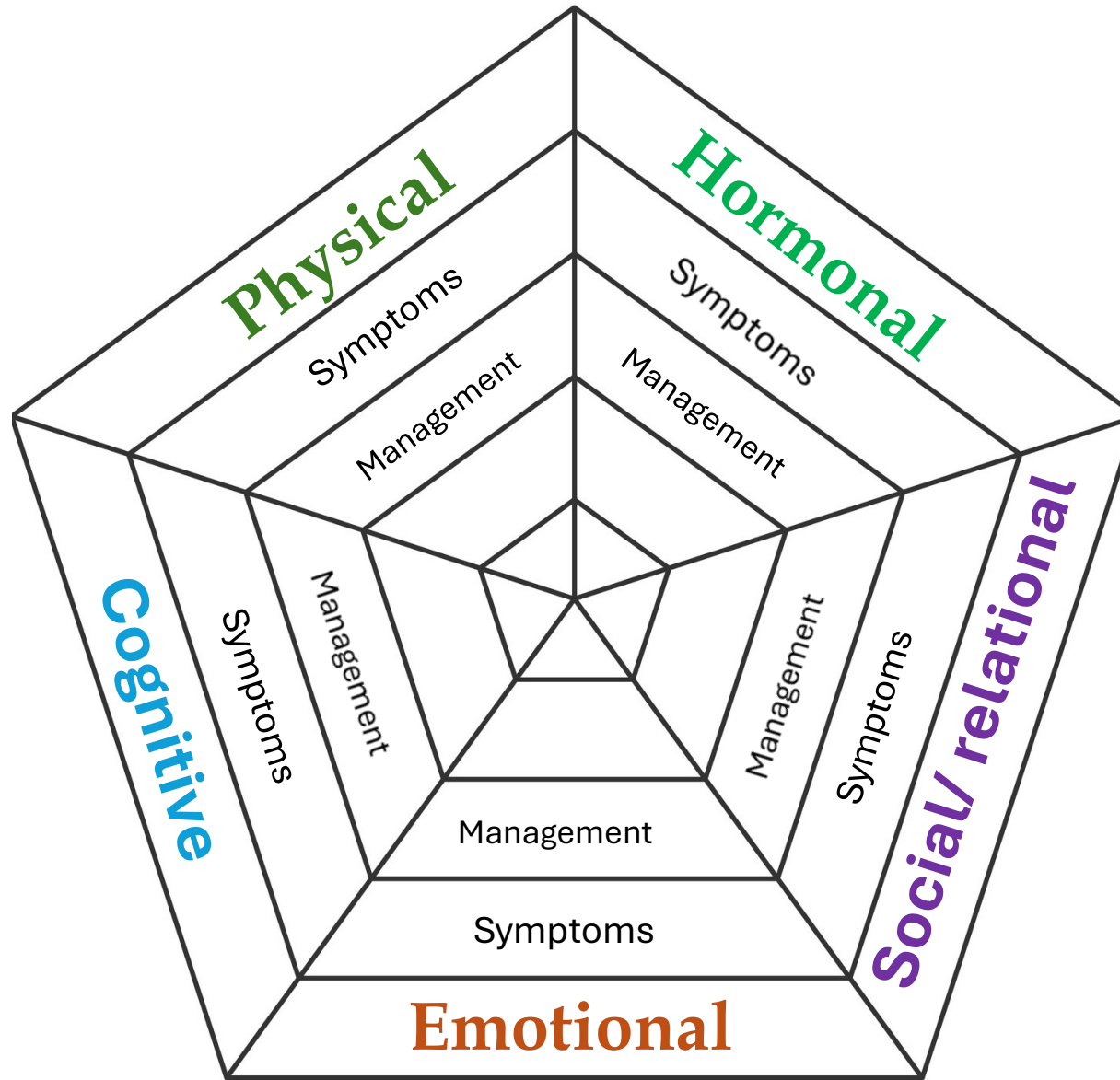
- HRT – Hormone replacement therapy
- ERT – Estrogen replacement therapy
- MHT – Menopause hormone therapy

Narrowing it down

Filling in the puzzle pieces

- Where are you in the menopause spectrum:
 - When was your last period?
- Have you had a hysterectomy?
- Are you on any hormonal therapy now?
 - What kind? Is it working?
 - Are you getting hormones from a ‘hormone clinic’
- Are you taking any supplements?
- **List the top 3 symptoms for today’s visit**
 - Additional symptoms may require additional visits
- List of major medical conditions
 - HTN, Blood clots, breast cancer, depression/anxiety, thyroid disease, Liver disease, osteoporosis, heart disease, migraines
- Are you a smoker?





Symptoms of Menopause

Physical
Hormonal

- Weight gain
- Insomnia
- Low libido - dyspareunia
- Headaches
- Cognitive problems
- Irritability – mood swings
- Hot flashes
- Vulvovaginal atrophy
- Skin changes
- Thinning hair
- Body image issues
- Diminishing health

Symptoms of Menopause

Emotional
Cognitive
Social

- Relationship changes
- Marital struggles/distancing – extramarital affairs
- Secondary parenting and grandparenting
- Work and role changes
- Failing to reach life goals – losing sense of purpose
- Priority changes – letting go
- Seeking affirmation
- Financial worries (financial insecurities)– retirement concerns
- Ageing anxiety – fear of ageing – every second person in the world is believed to hold mod or high ageist attitudes (WHO, 2021)
- Fear of being a burden
- Fear of death

Approach

Start	Start with worst first – what is the most troubling
Test	Hormone testing Test for other rule-outs
Treat	--Treat what you can with what will impact the most symptoms --Consider hormonal options & risk factors
Consider	Consider non-hormonal options

Hormone Testing – Is it necessary?

- FSH
 - LH
 - Serum Estradiol?
 - Serum Progesterone?
 - Serum testosterone
-
- *Krewson C. Experts warn menopause hormone tests often unnecessary.
Contemporary OB/GYN Aug 26, 2025

Rule Outs

- Thyroid
- PCOS
- Endocrine
- MDD

MRT – Benefits

What part of these can MHT remedy?

- Hot flashes
- Insomnia
- Vaginal dryness (dyspareunia) - libido
- Cognitive
- Mood

MRT – Risks

- Venous blood clots
- Gallbladder disease
- Abnormal uterine bleeding
 - Must use progestin with estrogen in women with a uterus to prevent endometrial cancer

Estrogen

Estrogen Forms

- E -1 Estrone
- E- 2 Estradiol – most bioavailable
- E -3 Estriol

Estrogen Products

- Oral
- Patches
- Vaginal ring
- Targeted therapy – vaginal products
 - Estrogen vaginal cream
 - Estrogen vaginal suppositories

Non-Estrogen Treatment - Pharmaceutical

- Fezolinetant
 - Neurokinin 3 (NK3) receptor antagonist
 - Blocks activity of the NK3 receptors in the brain (diminishing vasomotor symptoms)
- Ospemafine (oral for vaginal dryness)
- Gabapentin

Progestins

Progestin Forms

- USP **Progesterone** – micronized “natural” or bioequivalent
 - Commercially available
 - Available by compounding
- **Progestin (synthetic)**
 - Medroxyprogesterone (DMPA)
 - Norethindrone
 - Levonorgestrel
 - Drospirenone
 - Etonorgestrel
 - Desogestrel
- **LNG IUS (Levonorgestrel releasing IUD)**

Combined Estrogen- progestin

Combined products

- Oral contraceptives – low dose
- Patches
- Compounded

Testosterone

Testosterone

PROS

- Increased cognitive function
- Decreased fatigue
- Increased muscle mass
- Increased libido for those with sexual dysfunction
- Some studies indicate increased bone density

CONS

- Androgen-related side effects
 - Acne
 - Hirsutism
 - Deepening voice
 - Irritability/moodiness

Safety: Who should NOT use MHT

- Known or suspected breast cancer or other estrogen/progesterone-sensitive cancer
- Undiagnosed genital bleeding
- Recent blood clot
- Pregnancy
- Liver disease
- Hypersensitivity to MHT

What about compounded products?

PROS

- “Bio-equivalent”
- Dosing can be customized
- May be more cost-effective
- There are reliable compounding pharmacies

CONS

- Compounding pharmacies not regulated by FDA
- Products not always tested in vigorous controlled studies

What about hormone pellets?

PROS

- “Bio-equivalent”
- Dosing can be customized

CONS

- Expense
- Not always provided by licensed GYN providers
- Associated with frequent hormone testing in attempt to “monitor effectiveness” and adjust dosage”
- Cochrane reviews report adverse events related to excessive sequestering of hormones in adipose tissue
- Lack of reliable source of compounded pellets.

Over-the-counter remedies



Alternative OTC

Bona Fide – multiple products targeting menopausal symptoms

Fiber - 25-35 gm daily

Vit D -2,000 to 4,000 daily

Omega 3 – 500-2,000 daily

Magnesium

B-Complex

Iron

Ashwaganda

Melatonin

Nutrafol

Cinnamon & Turmeric

What else?

- LISTENING
- AFFIRMING
- EDUCATING
- REASSURING
- ACUPUNCTURE
- COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL
THERAPY

Need additional help?

NAMS Certified Practitioner
Counselors
Compounding pharmacists

Case Review –Age 37

Presenting symptoms

- Fatigue
- Lightheadedness, weakness
- Bloating, fluid retention
- No sex drive
- Weight gain
- Mood swings
- Racing heart rate
- Brain fog
- Cold when others are warm
- Hot flashes
- Anxiety at night
- Skin sensations – crawling and electric shock sensations
- Hair loss, brittle nails
- Joint pain
- Cold sores
- Frequent illness

Labs

- CMP
- LIPIDS
- DHEAS normal
- Estradiol – 8.21 (13-150)
- Progesterone – 0.05
- FSH 2.19
- TSH 8.56
- Anti-TPO 59
- Ferritin and CBC – normal
- SHGB – 142.7

Pt is taking OCPs and supplemental estrogen cream
Strong family hx of MDD
Fam hx of thyroid disease

Resources

North American Menopause Society. Key points from the 2022 Hormone therapy position statement of the Menopause Society. Powerpoint <https://menopause.org/>