

Life transition of menopause



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One of the most common fears in woman today is the fear of aging. Our society has come up with various ways of trying to stay young looking as long as possible. There are markets for hair dye that keeps the grays away, wrinkle creams that firm the skin, and even plastic surgery to pull the skin tight to get rid of wrinkles. Some women even get Botox injections and implants to help keep their skin looking young and firm. Even though scientists and surgeons have come up with multiple ways to keep a woman's exterior features looking younger, a woman's interior feature's has a biological clock that ticks regardless.

One of the biggest unavoidable transitions a woman will go through in her life is " the change" which is known as peri-menopause and menopause. Peri-menopause and menopause are challenging transition times for any woman. A million American women enter menopause each year. (Schardt, 2008) This is a transition of life that is unavoidable and weighs on a woman physical and emotionally. With the right attitude women can face menopause head on and get through it with all the comfort they need. Menopause physically is a natural biological event in which menstruation cycles begin to stop.

Menopause usually affects women around their 50's. There are some premature menopause cases that can happen at any age due to surgeries such as hysterectomies, genetic factors such as chromosome abnormalities, autoimmune disease, radiotherapy and chemotherapy, and infection. (Abermethy, 2003) When it comes to managing menopause, one approach does not fit all. Hormones are just one part of the whole woman. Diet, exercise, lifestyle, relationships, and stressors are all important factors that,

along with hormones, affect health. (Blench, 2009) Menopause results from reduced secretion of the ovarian hormones estrogen and progesterone, which takes place as the finite store of ovarian follicles is depleted. (Nelson, 2008)

The process of menopause does not happen over night. It is a process that happens gradually. When the process begins this is called peri-menopause and usually starts about 5 years before a woman goes through menopause and when a woman is in her 40's. A woman begins to transition into menopause when she has had no menstrual periods for 12 months and as not other medical reason for her periods to stop.

Short-term symptoms of menopause may include heart palpitations and difficulty concentrating, memory loss, however hot flashes and night sweats are more common. Sexual difficulties may also occur, including changes in libido, pain during intercourse and decreased vaginal lubrication. Intermediate effects Symptoms that commonly arise after the menopause include bladder symptoms, such as urgency, frequency and dysuria, which develop as a result of urogenital atrophy. The vagina changes shape, becoming shorter and flatter, with decreased vaginal secretion and a susceptibility to infection.

Blood flow decreases and the epithelium becomes thinner and more transparent. Vaginal dryness can lead to vaginal discomfort, irritation and dyspareunia. Physical changes in hair, skin and nails become noticeable after the menopause. (Abermethy, 2003) Long-term effects of menopause comprise an increased risk of cardiovascular disease and osteoporosis. (Jackson, 2011) The severity of symptoms depends on the woman. If she is

active, eating a balanced diet, has stress-coping skills and a positive outlook, the symptoms are usually less severe and the woman is able to go through what is quaintly called " the change of life" more comfortably.

While the woman is experiencing many physical challenges and changes during menopause there are options that can help ease the transition. One of the best things a woman can do physically through menopause is get involved in exercise. It helps decrease the risk of heart disease, osteoporosis, reduce hot flashes, and can also help with fatigue. Exercising also helps with weight control, stress reduction, depression, breast cancer risks, and risk of stroke. (Mayo, 2011) One of the main causes of discomfort during menopause is hot flashes and vaginal bleeding from the fluctuation of hormones.

Even though these symptoms are a part of menopause there is not a set time when these symptoms will stop. Some women have had symptoms for over a decade. Another way to help reduce the severity of hot flashes is trying to figure out what triggers a hot flash, such as hot drinks, spicy foods, alcoholic drinks, stress, hot weather, or a warm room. If one of these triggers a hot flash then it is best to avoid the trigger until the symptoms subside. (The Canadian Press, 2009) Some women have the option of being placed on Hormone Replacement therapy from their doctors.

It is crucial that women seek the advice of a doctor before taking any hormone replacement because of the side effects that can be associated with taking the replacement drug. In 2002, the Women's Health Initiative reported that women who were taking estrogen plus progestin for menopause had an increased risk of breast cancer, blood clots, stroke, and

heart disease. (Schardt, 2008) Reducing alcohol and caffeine can also have a positive effect on hot flashes, night sweats, and sleep disturbances.

While a woman is going through many physical changes in her body she will also go through some emotional challenges as well. There are many women who go through an emotional rollercoaster as they go through menopause. They tend to be more sensitive and more emotional and feel blue due to their symptoms because of hormone loss. This increases emotional fragility and a sense of low self-esteem. Deficiency in hormones and lack of sleep can cause irritability, confusion, sadness, angry outbursts, tears and relational problems.

Menopause also comes at a time in a woman's life when they may be dealing with other life transitions that can bring forth other emotional issues. They may be coping with empty nest syndrome, their parent's health digressing, relationship problems, dealing with teenagers, and their job may be at a standstill. Some women have a hard time coping with the fact that since they are in menopause their child bearing years are over. There have been some women who have conceived during menopause but there are more health risks that associate with a pregnancy during menopause.

Some women feel that being a woman who has children is her call in life, therefor when she is unable to bear children there may be some emotional feelings that come along in this situation. While replacement hormones may be used to help with some of the physical transition to help ease the process of menopause there are other methods that can help a woman emotionally as well. Women should incorporate natural methods of reducing stress such as recreational and exercise programs. Using aromatherapy, reflexology,

yoga, and stress reduction all help to improve general well being. Abemethy, 2003) While women are transitioning thru menopause this is a great time to take a time out from the usual lifestyle and venture out and start a new hobby and get into new social settings. For example, joining a book club would be a great way to meet others in the same group and who may be going to menopause as well. While many women are going through other transitions such as empty nest this may also be a great time to get more active in a ministry. It is important thought that women who are going through menopause reduce their stress life.

This is the season in their life where they can begin to relax and reflect on things God has given them and how he has cared for them through life. For women going through menopause a great way to seek stability, while their physical and emotionally state of being is unstable, is seeking God for comfort and stability. Seeking comfort in God will help alleviate depression and anxiety caused by menopause. (Hoy, 2004) Sometimes women experience a stage of life when they feel restless and overloaded, and they lose their sense of identity.

Many women going through the change of life often times feel out of control and restless. Taking the time to seek out God's word and finding comfort through him is a great way to get through menopause. Isaiah 58: 11 says, " The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose water never fails. " Isaiah 51: 12 says, " I even, I am he who comforts you. " These two verses are a great encouragement while going through the change of life.

There is comfort in knowing that God will always guide his sheep no matter where or what stage of life they are in. God is the sole provider of comfort and he promises, " As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you. " (Isaiah 66: 13) To receive all that is needed from God means that there is a consistent connection to the One who gives all that is needed. In troubles, many times individuals are so consumed with finding an answer to healing that they forget to turn to God. (Thomas, 2011) Attitude and perspective can influence in many different ways of how a woman will handle her transition through menopause.

Some women will go through menopause and look at it as a negative aging factor. On the other hand, there are some women who look at menopause not as aging but as ripening. They begin to Re-prioritize their life. Include nutritional supplements such as tea and soy. Begin to Pace exercise and stress, Evaluate their health, and gain Nutrition for their body and soul. (Mayo, 2011) Some women will be said that their fertile years are over, on the other hand some women will be glad they will not have to deal with monthly periods.

It all depends on the outlook of the person going through menopause Surprisingly, in a recent BBC news article " Women are Happier after Menopause" it quoted a Jubilee Report where 76% of post-menopausal women said their health was better, 75% said they had more fun, and 93% said they had more independence and more choice in everything from work to leisure pursuits. Menopause is not something that is preventable or avoidable because it is the way God has designed the female body. All things

have a season and going through menopause is one of those life-changing seasons.

For the fact that menopause is a biological change that every single woman in the world will go through it is important to know what menopause is and how it happens and to know some of the signs that lead up to the perimenopause stage. When a woman knows more of what to expect before she goes throughout the change of life, it may better help her to cope more. It is important for a woman to understand that the change of life is normal and she is not alone. There are millions of women in America going through the change of life each year. There is more than that all over the world.

No matter what ethnic, culture background women come from they will experience menopause at some point in their life. The better prepared a woman is in facing menopause then the better her experience will be. It is also very important for women to realize that God the creator created them and knitted their bodies together that this would be part of the ripening process. Going through menopause does have some physical and emotionally imbalances that come along with it but God is the provider of comfort and will carry his creation through the process.