

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Dr. Troy H. Peters

Natural Approaches to Menopause

The symptoms of menopause — hot flashes, mood swings, depression, night sweats, to name a few — leave many women desperate for solutions. But searching for a solution these days can be overwhelming and confusing. All the advertisements for quick-fix solutions, plus the recent controversy surrounding hormone replacement therapy, have only added to the confusion.

Dr. Peters can help cut through the confusion. Chiropractors recommend tuning out the ads and focusing on a natural, holistic approach to managing menopause.

Stay Active

Remaining active is perhaps the simplest, yet most effective, all-natural tactic for alleviating menopause symptoms.

In fact, the importance of staying active is the primary factor that studies across the board agree upon.

For instance, the North American Menopause Society (NAMS) examined hot flashes in perimenopausal and menopausal women and concluded that regular exercise not only keeps “the core body temperature cool,” but also helps reduce other menopausal symptoms due to its “paced respiration.” (*Menopause* 2004;11:11-33.)

Visit the Chiropractor Regularly

A survey conducted in Australia revealed that over half of the women

had used alternative medicine during the past year to address signs of menopause. Chiropractic, massage and nutrition “were rated the most effective therapies.” (*Menopause* 2007;14:397-403.)

And experts agree that regular chiropractic visits can avert menopausal symptoms.

According to the Committee on Research of the International Chiropractor’s Association, The Kale Network and Kale Corporate Chiropractic, 73.4 percent of women with menopausal symptoms significantly improve with chiropractic care.

Dr. Peters takes a multifaceted approach to keeping menopausal patients symptom-free. Spinal health is the foundation of this unique approach. For instance, regular chiropractic check-ups keep the spine free of a common condition called **vertebral subluxation**, which has been linked with menopausal symptoms. Doctors of chiropractic correct vertebral subluxations with gentle and effective maneuvers called **chiropractic adjustments**.

In addition to keeping patients’ spines free of vertebral subluxations, Dr. Peters may recommend dietary supplementation for menopausal patients. Several of these recommendations are



outlined below.

Consider Dietary Supplements

Doctors of chiropractic advise patients that, while the media may tout a plethora of products as menopause cure-alls, offering miraculous results, research is clear that not every all-natural product is effective. What the studies do show is that “phytoestrogen [plant-based estrogen] tablets, evening primrose oil, and black cohosh are deemed the most effective products.” (*Menopause* 2007;14:397-403.)

To date, the evidence suggests that the following natural solutions are worth pursuing:

- **Black cohosh:** This herb is safe and effective for reducing menopausal symptoms, primarily hot flashes and possibly mood disorders.
- **Wild yam:** German health authorities have found that wild yam is effective at alleviating perimenopausal symptoms (*J Women’s Health* 2005;14:634 - 49).



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- **Chastetree or Vitex:** “Chastetree or Vitex is often recommended for women in early menopause who are experiencing irregular menstrual cycles and is reported to help breast tenderness, as well. Chastetree is often found in combination with black cohosh and other herbs. During menopause, excess production of the hormone prolactin interferes with estrogen’s effects and may promote estrogen-dependent cancers. Fortunately, prolactin is suppressed by *Vitex agnus castus* extract.” (*Arzneim Forsch/Drug Res* 1993;43:7.) The extract was also shown to promote progesterone synthesis, further alleviating menopausal symptoms.
- **Phytoestrogens:** Plant-based estrogens (phytoestrogens), including soy foods, red clover and evening primrose oil, appear to quell menopause symptoms.
- **St. John’s wort:** This herb has been shown to improve mild-to-moderate depression and dispel mood and sleep disorders related to the menopausal transition.
- **Glycyrrhiza acid:** An extract of licorice root, glycyrrhiza acid (GA) stimulates the conversion of testosterone to estrogen, supports the adrenals and protects the liver. Numerous studies indicate that GA is a safe, effective estrogen replacement therapy *except* for patients with high blood pressure. If you have high blood pressure, do not consume GA unless a health-care provider closely monitors you.
- **Dong Quai:** The Chinese have learned the value of Dong Quai extract, with its muscle-relaxant, analgesic and anti-inflammatory effects. Scientists believe it promotes progesterone synthesis in the body.
- **Ginseng:** Siberian ginseng (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*) and Ginseng (*Panax ginseng*) also beef up natural estrogen production.

- **Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinalis*), Burdock (*Arctium lappa*) and Oregon Grape root (*Mahonia aquifolia*):** All support liver function, which may lessen symptoms.
- **Motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*):** This plant may be beneficial for heart palpitations, hot flashes and vaginal dryness.

Variations in Menopause Symptoms

Keep in mind that menopause is a very individual experience — one solution will not work for every woman. Work with the doctor to tailor a solution for your particular symptoms.

While there are menopause symptoms that are common to most women, there is a wide variety in menopause experiences, based on a number of factors, including age, race and medical background.

For instance, the landmark *Study of Women’s Health*, based on 14,906 women, addressed “the diversity of the menopause experience by comparing symptom reporting in a large cross-sectional survey of women aged 40-55 years among racial/ethnic groups of women in the United States (Caucasian, African-American, Chinese, Japanese, and Hispanic).” The report concluded that the two consistent factors that clearly indicate menopause are: “hot flashes and night sweats; and psychological and psychosomatic symptoms.”

Curiously, while the overall occurrence of menopause does not differentiate between race or ethnicity, symptoms do: Caucasian women tend to suffer more from psychosomatic problems. On the other hand, African-American women tend to suffer more from hot flashes (*Soc Sci Med* 2001;52:345-56).

In addition, “rates of psychologic distress were highest in early perimenopause (28.9%) and lowest in premenopause (20.9%) and postmenopause (22%).” (*Am J Public Health* 2001;91:1435-42.)



Because of the disparities in symptoms, the *Study of Women’s Health* concluded that, in contrast to generally held beliefs about menopause, there is *not* a “universal menopausal syndrome.” Rather, there is a great deal of variety between perimenopausal women, postmenopausal women, hormone users, women who had a surgical menopause, women of different races and ethnic backgrounds and other factors not yet discovered. The symptoms are real — there is no myth there — they just vacillate widely between women (*Soc Sci Med* 2001;52:345-56).

Talk to Your Chiropractor First

Before initiating any supplementation program, check with your chiropractor. Although the therapies discussed in this article are safe for most women, some may produce serious side effects in rare cases.

If you or someone you love is suffering from menopausal-related symptoms, take heart. Chiropractic care may be the all-natural solution you’ve been searching for. Before turning to potentially dangerous drugs, give chiropractic a try. Don’t put off taking charge of your well-being — schedule an appointment for a chiropractic check-up today.

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