

Women can have menopausal symptoms for several years

Menopause is a period of hormonal change for women, indicated by the end of menstruation.

During menopause, estrogen production begins to diminish, and most women go through some symptoms of estrogen deficiency.

The life cycle of menopause begins several years before the end of menstruation and continues for several years after it.

When does menopause occur?

The average age for the onset of menopause is 51 years.

For most women, menopause occurs just beyond the midpoint of the 10-year period between the ages of 45 and 55.

Officially, a woman is menopausal once she has no periods for one full year, however, the ovaries don't stop functioning immediately.

Instead, during the premenopause phase, called

the climacteric, the ovaries produce estrogen in fits and starts - producing too much one month and very little the next.

This erratic hormone production helps explain why some women can have menopausal symptoms for several years.

Symptoms of falling estrogen levels include hot flashes, sweats, dizziness and poor sleep patterns.

For many women, hormone replacement therapy can help control these unwanted side effects which are associated with the climacteric and menopause.

Why do many women take hormone replacement therapy?

HRT can lessen the uncomfortable side effects of the climacteric and menopause, such as sleeplessness and hot flashes, and also protect women against serious medical conditions such as osteoporosis and heart disease.

Hormone replacement therapy can help many women stay healthy and feeling active and energetic.

The important thing to remember is that hormone replacement therapy can be tailored to suit each woman's needs, and it can be started soon after menopause.

If you think you may be experiencing menopause, discuss your symptoms with your doctor. Talk about your long term needs and the possible benefits of HRT.

Understanding Menopause

The complete change of life cycle, known as the climacteric, comes from the Greek klimakter meaning critical point in life.

Some early symptoms of the climacteric and menopause include:

- ✓ hot flashes
- ✓ night sweats
- ✓ palpitations/anxiety
- ✓ insomnia
- ✓ disorientation
- ✓ mood swings
- ✓ minor depression

HRT is an

effective option for many women in controlling the often uncomfortable side effects of menopause.

For more information, ask your doctor during your next visit.

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