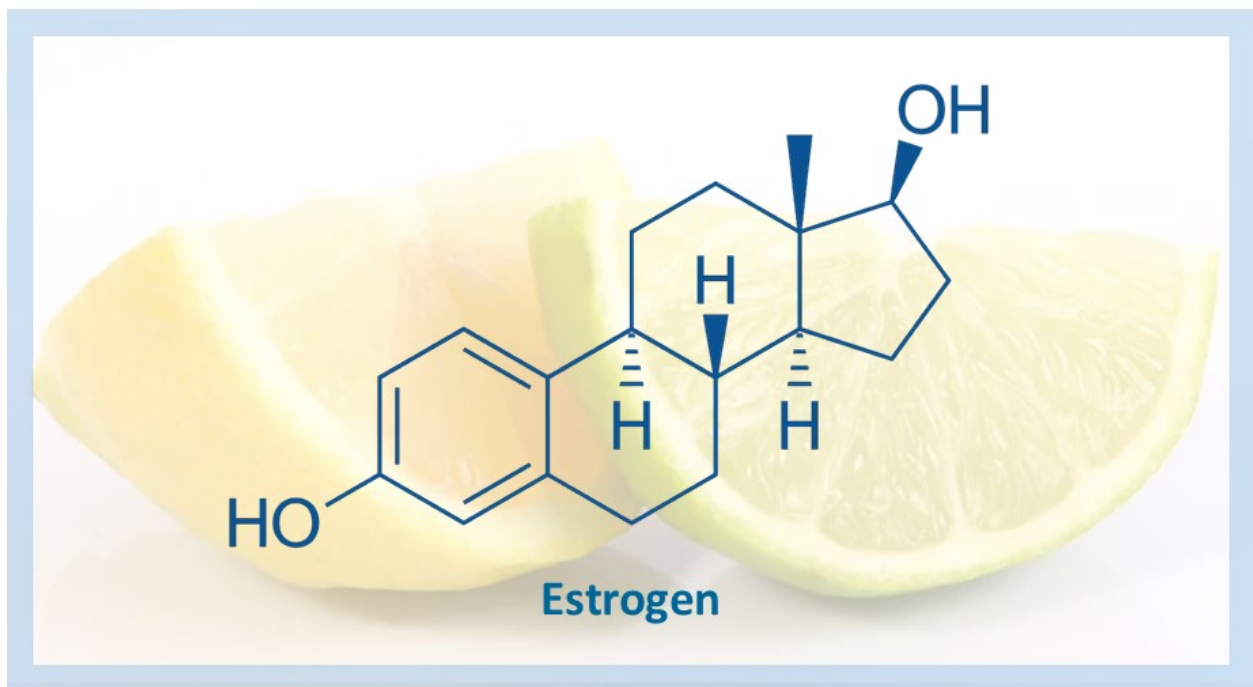


A NEW HOLISTIC APPROACH TO HORMONES

By Dr. Lori Puskar



Menopause Can Be A BEAUTIFUL Transitional Stage In A Woman's Life.

It holds enormous potential for transforming a woman's physical, mental, and emotional well-being. It often occurs over the course of several years between ages 48-52 and peri-menopause starting as young as 40.

There are several stages and they can vary both in their length and symptom picture.

Menopause (i.e. the permanent cessation of menses for 12 months resulting from estrogen deficiency and which is not associated with a pathology) can occur either due to gradual natural processes, or also be abruptly induced by artificial means (e.g. surgery, radiation, drug therapy).

When it occurs as a natural part of aging, earlier on in the menopausal transition stage (i.e. perimenopause), the menstrual cycle undergoes variability of its duration, and as it progresses women will typically experience amenorrhea for a period of 60 days or more.

During this time many women will also experience symptoms (e.g. hot flashes & night sweats), however menopause affects many other body systems as well including urinary, genital, musculoskeletal, psychological, and cardiovascular.

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A woman will have entered the post-menopausal stage once menstruation has ceased for 1 year and supportive lab work conveys an elevated FSH level (> 40 IU/L).

While menopause may produce some concerning and/or uncomfortable signs and symptoms, it is not to be considered a true disease state or pathology but a normal bodily response to a naturally changing hormonal rhythm.

As life expectancy increases, it is worth noting that women are now estimated to be spending up to one-third of their lives in this “menopausal” stage.

Nervous System Communications To The Hypothalamus, Adrenals And Ovaries Are Largely Responsible For The Physiological Changes That Occur Throughout A Woman’s Life.

The hormone (GnRH) stimulates the secretion of the anterior pituitary hormones, luteinizing hormone (LH) and follicle stimulating hormone (FSH), that ultimately control the production of the gonadal steroids estrogen & progesterone.

Menopause involves an absence of active ovarian follicles, which results in the reduced production of estrogen, progesterone, testosterone, and DHEA from the ovaries.

In response to the drop in estrogen, the pituitary gland increases the secretion of FSH & LH (note: When FSH > 25 IU/L women become more likely to experience symptoms), which continues throughout the postmenopausal stage.

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LH and FSH cause the postmenopausal ovaries and adrenal glands to continue to secrete the androgens androstenedione & testosterone, which can then be converted to estrogen from cholesterol and pregnenolone.

Thus, in postmenopausal woman circulating levels of estrone are higher than estradiol, but because the ratio of androgens to estrogen has changed, and there is relatively more testosterone due to there being less estrogen to oppose it.

This is the reason we need to look beyond just Estrogen and Progesterone levels as the REAL CAUSE to your Hormonal Imbalance.

A Holistic Approach to Menopause

The aim of using Holistic medicine during menopause is to manage the patient's symptoms while nourishing the mind and the body in a way that will assist with the adjustments to its new ovarian and adrenal hormonal levels.

Our goal should not be to simply override the body's naturally fluctuating hormonal rhythms (i.e. raise circulating levels of estrogen, progesterone, testosterone, etc.), but to support the health of the body as a whole.

To this end, the holistically-minded practitioner will understand the value of taking a 'systems' vs. purely 'symptoms-based' approach to menopause, and recognize that outside of supporting hormonal balance

via the reproductive system, optimizing adrenal and nervous system activity as well as liver and gastrointestinal function will also aid the body as it adjusts to its new means of hormonal production and activity.

Depending on the patient's individual symptom picture, certain herbs and Natural actions will vary in their level of prioritization, dosing strategy, and duration of treatment, with the goal always being to wean or withdraw treatment whenever possible.

In some cases, supplements and herbs will be best used acutely in higher dosing ranges to manage more difficult symptoms causing disruption of daily life (e.g. hot flashes, insomnia), while others may require a more long-term approach, especially when the intention is to nourish the Entire Hormone System, or aid in the prevention of complications or chronic disease states associates with the postmenopausal stage (e.g. cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, and cancer).

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The Reproductive System & Hormonal Decline

Many of the uncomfortable symptoms of menopause are due in large part to the body's inability to respond to decreases in not only estrogen, but also progesterone, testosterone and DHEA (dehydroepiandrosterone).

Fluctuations in estrogen are largely responsible for menopausal symptoms as well as the cognitive changes which can occur when estrogen rapidly declines leading to **“brain fog” and short term memory loss (which can be worsened by difficulty sleeping).**

Moreover, these hormonal changes are also largely responsible for the increased risk of osteoporosis, cardiovascular disease, and urogenital atrophy caused by thinning of the reproductive tissues and leading to vaginal dryness/discomfort, urinary symptoms, and painful intercourse. Conventionally, hormone therapy (HRT) is used to treat menopausal symptoms and prevent vaginal/urogenital atrophy, as well as preserve a healthy lipoprotein profile and prevent bone loss. In menopausal women, the administration of physiologic doses of estradiol (E2) and/or a combination of estrogen-progestin therapy results in a rapid and sustained decrease in LH & FSH levels which can decrease the severity and frequency of hot flashes, improve urogenital atrophy and sleep disturbance, and prevent osteoporosis and associated fractures.

However, HRT is still known to carry serious risks (e.g. increased risk of breast cancer, ovarian cancer, thromboembolism, stroke and coronary heart disease). Such risks do not appear to be associated with Holistic medicines.

Plant constituents which appear primarily responsible for such estrogen modulating effects are collectively referred to as phytoestrogens due to the fact that many structurally resemble estradiol and thus can act in a similar manner.

They are present in common foods such as soybeans, grains, fruits and vegetables.

Studies have suggested a decreased incidence of breast cancer and lower occurrence of menopausal symptoms and osteoporosis in women from countries with a high consumption of phytoestrogens.

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Phytoestrogen Natural Examples

- Red Clover
- Flax seed
- Tribulus
- Wild Yam
- Panax Ginseng
- Licorice
- Alfalfa
- Grapes

Given the concerns regarding potential adverse effects of hormone replacement therapy, phytoestrogens have played a significant role in the exploration for alternatives for the treatment of menopausal symptoms, and their effects specifically on the alleviation of menopausal symptoms and the maintenance of bone mineral density have demonstrated some promising results.

Phytoestrogens are also potent anti-inflammatories, and may help promote indirect estrogen effects.

In post-menopause phytoestrogens may decrease the symptoms of estrogen withdrawal by binding to vacant receptors and reducing the symptoms of hot flashes by convincing the body that there is more estrogen present in the bloodstream than there actually is.

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Reproductive System & Hormonal Decline Primary Symptoms

- Menopausal symptoms (e.g. hot flashes, night sweats, and sleep disturbance)
- Vaginal dryness/painful intercourse
- Low Libido
- Hair thinning, facial hair & acne
- Frequent infections (e.g. urinary tract)
- Estrogen receptor resistance
- Pituitary Dysfunction

Adrenal Dysfunction May be a Key Factor

Research into the physiological changes which take place during perimenopausal and menopausal stages reveals that in addition to the hormonal shift which brings an end to menstruation, the adrenal and nervous systems are also undergoing dramatic changes.

The cessation of ovarian estrogen production has the potential to influence central nervous system function as well as a number of neurological disorders that can affect women during the menopausal transition including ***memory loss and mild cognitive impairment.***

The adrenal glands are now recognized as an important contributor to the foundation of hormonal health and to a woman's healthy aging, and changes in circulating steroid hormones released from the adrenals during the menopausal transition ***may in fact be more important than the decline of ovarian function in terms of affecting estrogen and androgen balance.***

As ovarian hormone production slows, the adrenal glands become primarily responsible for balancing the body's hormonal system, thus supporting adrenal function is imperative to maintaining optimal health and reducing uncomfortable symptoms during menopause.

Truly the importance of Natural Adaptogens cannot be overlooked. Interestingly, the consumption of foods containing phytoestrogens has also been found to potentially alter adrenocortical function as well as cortisol and androgen production.

Another important and complementary action group are the Natural Nervines (Tonics & Relaxants), and often these actions can be synchronized to work together alongside each other in a way that will benefit the body on multiple levels.

Nervine Tonics & Relaxants are a group of herbs that help relieve stress through promoting parasympathetic nervous system ("rest & digest") dominance.

They are used primarily to support symptoms related to stress, pain, sleep disturbance, anxiety, and depression, and will strengthen & nourish the nervous system when coping with excessive or prolonged periods of tension and/or exhaustion.

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Adrenals & Nervous System Primary Symptoms

- Mood disorders (e.g. anxiety, depression, mood swings)
- Stress & Irritability/Agitation
- Insomnia & sleep disturbance
- Cognitive changes (e.g. impaired memory, concentration)
- Low Libido
- Key Natural Actions
- Adaptogens
- Nervine Tonics & Relaxants

The Most Overlooked Component: The Liver & Digestive System

The holistically-minded practitioner understands just how crucial digestive health is to the overall healthy functioning of the body.

The daily toxic and metabolic burden imposed upon the gastrointestinal tract and its accessory organs (e.g. the liver) have the potential to affect our mental, emotional, and physical health in profound ways.

Moreover, the intestinal microbiome, along with the enzyme and **pH** levels are key and often overlooked components of conventional treatment approaches to the symptoms menopause.

The severity of GI symptoms, including abdominal pain, altered bowel habits, and bloating, occur often but vary widely across patients during the menopause transition with one possible mechanism being declining or low ovarian hormone levels.

When GI symptoms are found alongside mood swings, and headaches, there is often a need for supportive work surrounding liver detoxification or clearance to ensure adequate detox of excess hormones.

Additionally, recent studies are providing a deeper understanding of the importance of orally consumed Holistic medicines in relation to the patient's gut microbiome.

What is becoming abundantly clear is the importance of a healthy digestive system not only for the health of the body as a whole, but also for the bioactivity of many of our Holistic medicines. For example, some common properties of most estrogens is their end stage detox by gut flora.

Hormonal Involvement of Liver & Digestive System Primary Symptoms

- Abdominal bloating & indigestion
- Dysfunctional bowel motility (e.g. Diarrhea/constipation)
- Gastrointestinal System Dysfunction

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Your Next Step – A **HOLISTIC NATURAL HORMONE PROGRAM**

The aim of using Holistic medicine during menopause is to address key symptomatic complaints while taking a whole-body or systems-based approach to this transitional period in a woman's life.

Mental, emotional, and physical aspects of health should all be acknowledged while assisting with the adjustments to the body's new circulating levels of ovarian and adrenal hormones.

Beyond supporting hormonal balance via the reproductive system, optimizing adrenal and nervous system activity as well as liver and gastrointestinal function should all be prioritized.

As always, when used alongside appropriate diet and lifestyle practices, Holistic medicine continues to prove its value and unique ability to improve health outcomes.

Though the exact nature of Holistic treatment should depend on the factors identified in the individual case, an effective treatment approach should be selected from the following:

To determine which key factors are involved in your hormonal problems, let's discuss your symptoms and how a **Tailor-Made HOLISTIC HORMONE OPTIMIZATION PROGRAM** will help you.

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ABOUT DR. LORI PUSKAR



I am a “forty-something” wife and mother, who is a peer of yours, and understands exactly what you are going through.

Handling your hormone situation requires an expert who knows this and what to do about it.

I am a licensed doctor who has dedicated the past 25 years of my career, advancing my knowledge in bio-chemistry and physiology to find the ABSOLUTES to Hormonal Issues.

My goal is to be the Holistic Medicine Doctor you trust to help you achieve all of this and **Look and Feel Better Naturally** without the use of medications!

If you are serious about handling your hormones, there is HOPE! And I can HELP!

Let’s discuss your symptoms and how a **Tailor-Made HOLISTIC HORMONE PROGRAM** will help you.

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