

Demystifying Menopause

Take home messages

Menopause is normal and natural, but that doesn't mean you can't choose to optimize your menopausal health and experience.

Menopause can cause lots of symptoms that are noticeable, and some that are not. Take care of your heart and your bones with healthy eating, healthy weight, exercise, and calcium with vitamin D.

Lifestyle changes matter. Alcohol and obesity increase cancer risk substantially more than hormone therapy.

Hormone therapy for many women is a safe and effective option to treat symptoms. Like many things we do, it has its good and bad, but overall for most women, the good outweighs the bad. Women who take hormone therapy on average live longer than women who don't. Discuss with your doctor.

Hormones are hormones, whether you call them bioidentical or not. Ensure the products you are taking are regulated, which is the only way to ensure you are getting the correct and consistent dose. There can be as much harm from too little as too much.

Effective non-hormone prescription options to treat menopause symptoms include some categories of antidepressants (SSRI's), and a pain medicine called Neurontin.

Many botanical therapies have been promoted for menopause management and have been shown to be at least 30% effective, which is the same as placebo. But hey, if it's safe and it makes you feel better, what's wrong with that?

Genitourinary symptoms of menopause (vaginal and bladder symptoms, pain with sex) can be dramatic and debilitating. Putting estrogen in the vagina is extremely effective and very safe – it is not the same as putting it into your whole body. Many moisturizer products are available for the vagina that are also quite effective. Look for products that have hyaluronic acid or glycerin. Do not ignore these symptoms. Talk to your doctor, and talk early! Don't let it get bad – it will get harder to make it better. Doesn't matter how old you are – you can treat GSM the same way at any age.

Resources for you

North American Menopause Society

- ▶ [Menopause.org/for-women](https://www.menopause.org/for-women)

American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology

- ▶ <https://www.acog.org/womens-health/healthy-aging>

Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology of Canada

- ▶ [Menopauseandyou.ca](https://www.menopauseandyou.ca)

British Menopause Society

- ▶ <https://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/hrt-the-history/>

The Menopause Manifesto (2021) – Dr. Jen Gunter