



Navigating Challenging Menopausal Symptoms

Hot Flashes, Flushes, Night Sweats & Vaginal Complaints

Hot flashes at night are commonly referred to as night sweats. Night sweats can initiate anxiety attacks. If this has ever happened to you, you know what it is like to be suddenly yanked awake by “who knows what” and left hot, sweaty, trembling, and fearful. Waking up and feeling as if you are “unable to move” may also be part of this equation. This feeling is related to a stress response triggered by natural chemicals in your body. It will pass shortly. After the hot flash waves through, the cold chills arrive. Lucky you!

Another cause of hot flashes is the *Central Nervous System* notifying the brain that your muscles need more energy. The following is a scientific explanation of the physiology of a hot flash, which is controlled by the adrenal glands. I apologize for not remembering where I read it.

"Hot flashes are due to the hypothalamic response to declining ovarian estrogen production. Declining estrogen levels induce hypophysiotropic neurons in the arcuate nucleus of the hypothalamus to release gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) in a pulsatile manner, which in turn stimulates the release of luteinizing hormone (LH). Extremely high LH pulses occur during the period of declining estrogen production. LH has vasodilatory effects, which lead to flushing."

Anything that makes the body too acidic can cause hot flashes and night sweats,

- Acidic foods
- White sugar
- Excessive heat
- Unexpressed stress, fear, anger
- Hydrogenated or saturated fats
- Intense exercise or sexual activities
- Caffeinated drinks, chocolate, tea, coffee, cola
- Cayenne, black pepper, ginger, and other hot or spicy foods and herbs
- Tobacco
- Marijuana

The following can help to cool hot flashes and night sweats.

- **Vitamin E** (no more than 400 IU per day) taken in the afternoon will help you through the night and the following morning when night sweats can disturb sleep. Vitamin E may interact with certain medications, particularly those affecting the heart.
- **Black Cohosh** (not *Blue Cohosh*) for up to six months, at 40 mg per day or as directed on the bottle or by your doctor. Black cohosh is generally well tolerated, with no significant adverse effects beyond occasional mild stomach discomfort in most individuals. Still, it seems somewhat "iffy" to me. Recent Kaiser Permanente studies have found that black cohosh is no more effective than a placebo. Still, it seems somewhat "iffy" to me. Black cohosh is also believed to have beneficial effects in reducing the symptoms of vaginitis and related imbalances. Don't take black cohosh if you have high blood pressure or take high blood pressure medication, as it can cause an unsafe drop in blood pressure.
- **Sage** can be taken as a tea to help alleviate hot flashes and night sweats. Use 1/2 teaspoon of dried leaf in 1 cup of boiling water (steeped 5-7 minutes), up to 3 times per day. It works immediately, allowing you to use it whenever needed. For added sweetness, add a touch of honey or *Stevia*.
- Leave **Motherwort** extract and a glass of water on your nightstand. If you are awakened with night sweats, place drops on your tongue and swallow with water. Use the dosage as directed on the label.
- Place a few drops of **Basil** or **Thyme** essential oil on a handkerchief or cotton ball, then place it in a *Ziplock* sandwich bag. Open and inhale when a hot flash strikes.
- Findings are mixed for **Chaste Berry** (*Vitex*, *Chaste tree*), which affects pituitary function and is reported to regulate hot flashes and dizziness. It is used for PMS and tender breasts, but it can raise or lower your libido (sex drive), depending on your chemistry. Chaste Berry lacks phytosterols, which makes it a slow-acting tonic, and, for this reason, it requires at least a year's commitment, even though you might see positive results within three months. You can't use Chaste Berry with dopamine antagonists because it increases brain dopamine levels. Unless you have painful periods, intense PMS symptoms, or a tendency for heavy or prolonged bleeding, there is no good reason to

rush and add Chaste Berry to your regimen. Still, it may be helpful. Powdered Chaste Berry can be mixed into smoothies.

- Drink 6-8 cups of **water** daily to replenish your body's fluids.
- You can increase your **salt** intake if you sweat frequently or excessively, but be mindful not to overdo it. Use sea salt, not ordinary iodized table salt.
- **Dress in layers** so you can strip out of some of them in a hurry. Wear a loose-fitting tank top rather than a T-shirt or long-sleeved pajamas at night.
- Keep a little **spray bottle of water** and a **small fan** on the bedside nightstand or in the car. Keep the air vents directed at your body and turn the fan (or air) on high after misting. Have water available to drink as well.
- Wear **flip-flops** instead of shoes when driving, especially when going long distances.
- Because caffeine and hot beverages are stimulating, they can cause hot flashes within moments of consumption. Avoid drinking caffeine or hot beverages within two hours of bedtime. Alcohol and a full stomach also disturb sleep.
- Keep your bedroom cool. Use lightweight blankets on your bed. Use a down comforter or a similar material with a cool-to-the-touch outer layer, which is excellent for resting your feet against during a hot spell.

Vaginal Dryness & Atrophy: A Common Menopausal Complaint

If you have tried all else and have been diagnosed with vaginal atrophy (thinning of vaginal skin), you might wish to talk to your doctor about an HRT vaginal cream. Initially, the cream may seep slightly through the vaginal barrier into the bloodstream, increasing overall estrogen levels. Once the vaginal wall begins to heal and thicken, this should decrease or even stop altogether. The process can take a few short weeks. So that you are aware, hormone replacement has not always been proven to help with vaginal atrophy. Some women are sensitive to vaginal hormone creams and may experience even more sensitivity or swelling. The following are signs and symptoms of vaginal problems.

- Irritation, burning, rawness, or red areas or spots near the vaginal entrance that hurt when washing, sitting, or bending over
- Vaginal dryness, pain, or slight bleeding during intercourse
- Discharge (can be thin, mucus colored, sticky, and dries in the pubic hair, with a fishy odor or no odor).
- UTIs (urinary tract infections), bladder infections, **Interstitial Cystitis**, or having bladder urgency, incontinence, or frequent urination at night
- Hive-like lumps under the skin of the labia that itch and stick around temporarily

Even before menopause takes place, changes take place in the vagina. 40% of all menopausal women have problems with vaginal bacterial overgrowths, causing vaginitis or vaginosis. Infections can come and go or decide to stay during perimenopause when hormone levels dip and dive. Vaginal dryness and atrophy are also common complaints. There are natural alternatives for relieving vaginal dryness and atrophy (see below). Always check with your doctor before trying anything new.

Holistic Alternatives for Vaginal Dryness & Atrophy

- Vaginal mucus and fluids are regulated by **calcium** (1000 mg daily). Vitamin D3 and K2 (in combination) promote calcium uptake. You should take half as much **magnesium** (500 mg) as calcium.

- **Sea Buckthorn Oil**, derived from the Sea Buckthorn berry fruit, is a traditional medicine used in Asia for thousands of years, which contains omega-3, 5, 6, 7, and 9. It also contains vitamins A, B, C, E, K, and P. Studies have proven that 3000 mg taken for three months (or 1.5 mg twice daily) can restore vaginal tissue integrity. The seeds of the berry contain omega-7 (Palmitic Acid, found in anchovies, blue-green algae, Macadamia nuts, avocado, and olive oil), which specifically eases vaginal atrophy within six weeks. It also alleviated the dryness associated with *Sjogren's Syndrome* (dry mucous membranes) and relieved dry-mouth symptoms within four weeks. The dosage can be reduced at the end of three months to 350-1000 mg to maintain vaginal health or stopped altogether and resumed later, if necessary. There are very few, if any, side effects to consuming this berry fruit. Sea Buckthorn oil also eases digestive upsets. You can also prick open a gel cap and apply the contents to herpes lesions to speed healing.
- **Evening Primrose Oil** (*Oenothera biennis* and *Oenothera lamarckiana*) contains GLA (a fatty acid), which helps alleviate vaginal atrophy and vaginal dryness, and is high in omega-6. Viral infections, such as Herpes Simplex Virus, often cause low GLA.
- Take **probiotics** that benefit the vaginal microbiome (*L. acidophilus*, *L. rhamnosus*, and *L. Reuteri*). Look for products that contain **prebiotics** to feed your probiotics or consider purchasing a separate prebiotic supplement. If you have *Histamine Intolerance*, you'll want to avoid certain strains of probiotics. I reveal them [here](#).
- **Black Cohosh, Saint John's Wort, Borage, and Vitamin D** have been used in the past.
- Over-the-counter **bio-identical estrogen** and **progesterone** creams or gels may help
- You might also try an over-the-counter **vaginal lubricant**, such as *Replens*. However, Replens contains *glycerin*, a sugar alcohol that can cause vaginal tissue to dry over time. Avoid mineral oil, which can cause a vaginal infection. Natural and safe lubricants are *Avocado* and *Olive* oils. I don't suggest Coconut oil because it absorbs too quickly and has been known to cause UTIs in some women. These oils can deteriorate condoms. If you're using a condom, use plain glycerin or *K-Y Gel*, but only on healthy skin. If your skin is raw or irritated, it can burn. Instead, consider [Good Clean Love](#) (vaginal gel).

Psssst! A Little Sex Talk

According to *Masters & Johnson*, having intercourse at least once or twice per week will help the vagina maintain natural lubrication. Even if you have been celibate for a while, the vagina will regain its production of mucus secretion and maintain muscle tone under normal circumstances. Satisfying yourself also helps. However, when hormones are imbalanced, as they are during menopause, no amount of sexual intercourse will correct this imbalance, nor should you try having intercourse until you are healed.

You and your partner may want to experiment with a vaginal lubricant or alternative methods for satisfying each other sexually while you are recovering instead. So that you know, if you still have all of your female parts and have been fertile, you can still get pregnant for up to one year after your periods cease.

If you decide to use an HRT, avoid sharing it with your partner through bodily contact. If they absorb your cream, it may cause adverse effects. Try placing your hormone cream in an area where your partner won't encounter it, such as the undersides of your arches (the area between your toes and the soles of your feet).

Incontinence

During menopause, changes occur in the bladder as well as the vagina. The lining between the vagina and the bladder grows thinner due to declining hormones. There's less natural cushioning. As a result, the urethra is looser than it used to be (like a balloon that has been inflated multiple times and is now lax and wrinkled), and urine can pool inside it, causing it to trickle down your leg after you stand up from the toilet. It is also why you can't hold it like you used to.

Sexual activities can aggravate the bladder and leave you feeling the urge to urinate when you don't have to. Before sexual activities, make sure you empty your bladder and use a lubricant if you have problems with vaginal dryness. Relieve your bladder as soon as you can after engaging in sexual play. Hormonal changes can lead to more frequent urination, especially at night.

To strengthen the vagina and the bladder, perform *Kegel* exercises throughout the day by contracting your bladder muscles as if you are trying to pull your vagina up to your navel or cut off urine flow. Then gently squeeze, release, and repeat. That's it. Start with just a few squeezes, three or four times a day, and gradually increase from there. However, do not perform Kegel exercises if you have bladder problems.

Dizziness & Feeling Off-Balance

Women going through menopause frequently feel dizzy and off-balance due to fluctuating hormones. They have reported experiencing panic attacks and agoraphobia (fear of being in public) for fear of falling or embarrassing themselves. **Dizziness** and feeling off-balance can also be symptoms of other disorders, such as digestive upset, blood pressure issues, **Tinnitus or Meniere's Disease**, Multiple Sclerosis (MS), and muscle tension. If this condition persists, please consult your healthcare provider to rule out any serious underlying issues.

Heart Palpitations

Heart palpitations (fluttery, racing, or thudding) sensations can be scary. Although heart palpitations are not dangerous, it is recommended to check with your doctor to ensure there is nothing more serious underlying them. Sometimes, it's simply a matter of drinking more water to stay hydrated.

The herb **Hawthorn** has been used for centuries in Europe to calm the nervous system. It is safe for long-term use, but please consult your healthcare provider if you are taking any cardiac medications.

Magnesium calms the muscles and helps maintain a proper heart rhythm. Calcium and magnesium work synergistically. Therefore, ensure you are getting both. Additionally, ensure that you consume sufficient essential fatty acids.

A deficiency in **B vitamins** can cause heart palpitations. Take a B complex or a multivitamin containing more than just one or two B vitamins.

Arthritic Conditions or Chronic Pain

If you're experiencing arthritic conditions or **chronic pain**, you may be deficient in Calcium, Magnesium, or Vitamin D. Calcium and magnesium work together to balance pH and relax muscles. Calcium also supports hormone health, teeth, and bones. However, caffeine in coffee, tea, and soda leaches calcium from your bones.

Bones need vitamin D to absorb calcium. I recommend calcium citrate, which is more readily absorbed by the body and doesn't interfere with iron absorption. Calcium citrate also binds **oxalate** in the intestine, thereby decreasing the risk of kidney stone formation. Take calcium with your meals to further improve absorption. If you are prone to kidney stones, consider meeting your calcium needs only through food sources.

- Goat milk, yogurt, cheese, and all-natural ice cream
- Canned salmon, sardines, and Albacore tuna (with bones is best)
- Bok choy, spinach, kale, collard greens, broccoli, seaweed
- Dandelion greens, romaine, and head lettuce
- Soy, soy milk, soy sprouts, tofu made with calcium sulfate (soy products are not for everyone)
- Mung and alfalfa sprouts
- Navy, pinto, garbanzo, lima, black, and split peas
- Oranges
- Parsley
- Brown rice (has a little calcium)

Note: Water hydrates the body. Dehydration is the number one cause of arthritic conditions.

Bone Density Testing

The National Osteoporosis Foundation recommends bone testing with special X-rays or an ultrasound device. A bone density test is painless. If you are 65 or older (especially with risk factors), postmenopausal with a fracture, thinking about treatment for osteoporosis, or have been on hormone replacement therapy for a long time, talk to your doctor about getting tested. Your BMD (bone mineral density) describes the thickness of the scanned bone. The result is called a T-score. The following should help you understand your results.

- Normal Bone Mass: Above -1
- Osteopenia: 1 to - 2.5 (may need treatment)
- Osteoporosis: Below - 2.5

Note: You've probably heard that red meat and dairy contribute to osteoporosis more than any other factor because they suck calcium right out of your bones. But did you also know that your favorite soda, if carbonated, contains phosphate? Calcium and phosphate must be balanced in

the body. So, if there is more phosphate in your body than calcium, your body will remove calcium from bone to restore balance in the rest of the body.

Nervous Tension

During menopausal stages, prioritizing **exercise** for relaxation is essential. Keeping muscles toned is an added benefit, but your focus should be on relaxation (through stretches and breathing) to ease nervous tension rather than working hard. Exercise also helps reduce hot flashes by lowering circulating LH and FSH levels. It also raises your level of endorphins ("feel good" chemicals in the brain), which drop significantly during hot flashes.

Indigestion, Heartburn & Acid Reflux

Purchase some over-the-counter dietary enzyme supplements. Your enzyme supplements should contain protease, cellulase, amylase, and lipase. If the problem is not having the necessary digestive enzymes in your gut to break down your carbohydrates, proteins, and fats, they'll relieve you of your symptoms. For long-term use, opt for a multi-enzyme formula that does not contain peppermint. *Peppermint* relaxes the upper esophageal sphincter, which keeps food from entering the esophagus, defeating the purpose.

Additionally, losing excess weight, especially around the middle, can help prevent acid reflux. You can also raise the head of your bed with blocks or sleep a little more upright on a pillow. Sixteen studies have demonstrated that weight loss and elevating the head of your bed are the most effective methods for reducing heartburn. Persistent problems may indicate more serious health issues.

Dry Skin, Hair & Nails

Due to hormonal changes, your hair, skin, and nails can become dry, leading to frustration and embarrassment. There's nothing worse than slathering on lotion to look down and see ashy legs

and dry cuticles again within minutes. And watching your hair go down the drain can be an emotionally painful experience.

- Stay away from any general run-of-the-mill over-the-counter products. They won't help you and are not suitable for you anyway.
- Take your vitamins, especially B vitamins, omegas (or eat fish 2-3 times each week), and silica to get some "good" oil back into your skin.
- Drink one glass of pure water every 2-3 hours to keep skin moisture replenished.
- Synthetic hormones are known to cause hair loss. To the best of my knowledge, bio-identical hormones do not.
- Eat high-quality meats (grass-fed meat, free-range chicken, wild-caught salmon) or other proteins.
- The thyroid gland is a significant regulator of crucial hormones. If it isn't working right, you'll experience more problems during menopause, including dryness (everywhere).
- Take multi-enzymes if you feel you have digestive problems. Being unable to digest your food means you are not getting the nutrients you need. Hair loss may be a sign of this.

Download my guide, [Minimizing Scar Damage \(and How to Have Healthy Glowing Skin at Any Age!\)](#).

Mental Sluggishness

Forgetting your pet's name, phone number, or the day of the week can be unsettling when it happens too often. Menopause can cause fuzzy thinking. Food sensitivities may be responsible, particularly sensitivities to wheat (gluten), cow's milk, sugar, citrus fruits, chocolate, peanuts, and soy. Eat live foods containing vitamins B-6, B-12, folic acid, and essential fatty acids, exercise regularly, and sleep at the same time each night for 7-10 hours. Learn something new. Studies now prove that learning new things and physical exercise can stimulate the growth of brain cells.

Depression & Emotional Numbness

Stress assaults estrogen, which makes for an even worse scenario during menopause, and can make you feel like you no longer exist on the “inside”. You might wonder where you went. There is a word for the inability to shake this negative frame of mind. It is *dysphoria*. If you are depressed, it is essential to take action to turn your depression around. It is also necessary to understand that depression and feeling numb to life are not all in your mind. It could very well be gut-related. Imbalances in the gut microbiome can lead to **Depression**.

Are You Just Tired or Is It Something Else?

Menopause does cause fatigue due to hormonal changes taking place. However, it could be something else, such as **Hypothyroidism** or **Chronic Fatigue Syndrome**.

Managing the Big Stresses in Life That Worsen Symptoms

Commit to being as kind to yourself as you possibly can. Be your own best friend. If a considerable amount of stress is an issue in your life, write down a list of all the things, people, and situations that stress you out. And I mean everything! Then, take another sheet of paper and prioritize your list by dividing it into three columns under the following headings.

- Things I Have *Control Over*
- Things I Have *Some Control Over*
- Things I Have *No Control Over*

Place your stress in the appropriate columns, which will give you some idea of what causes you the most stress in life and what changes are within your power to exert.

First, begin making changes to things entirely within your control. Then work on some of those things you have some power to change. Pray about the rest.

You may find that your stressors shift across different columns from time to time, as menopause is often a life stage when a woman chooses to live with greater purpose, guided by her personal spiritual, emotional, and moral priorities.

You might also want to break down a few stress-easing goals into **actionable steps**.

Disclaimer

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Artwork: *Thoughts of the Past* by John Roddam Spencer Stanhope