

A close-up photograph of pink cherry blossoms on dark, thin branches. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some showing prominent stamens. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white and light pink, suggesting a bright, sunny day. The overall mood is serene and natural.

Naturopathic approach to treating Menopause
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Perimenopause transition and physiological changes

- Irregular menstrual cycles and finally cessation of menstrual cycle
- Ages: 39-51 generally - but this can slightly vary between women
- Hormone changes:
 - Estrogen
 - Progesterone
 - FSH / LH
 - DHEA
 - Testosterone

Symptoms

- none
- hot flashes / night sweats
- sleep disturbances / insomnia
- anxiety / depression / irritability / mood swings
- memory loss / difficulty concentrating
- vaginal dryness or thinning
- decreased sexual response / interest
- hirsutism / hair loss or thinning
- skin dehydration
- incontinence
- osteoporosis
- cardiovascular disorders

Naturopathic assessment

- Thorough Intake / History:
 - mental, emotional, physical & spiritual
- Physical Exam:
 - blood pressure, temperature, heart rate, tongue & pulse
- Recommended Blood Work:
 - CBC
 - cholesterol
 - Hormones - estrogen, progesterone, FSH, LH, thyroid
- Saliva Testing:
 - estrogen / progesterone/testosterone
 - Adrenals
 - thyroid

Naturopathic approaches

- Normal and natural process (not a disease)
- Individualized approach: symptoms, risk factors, treatment plan
- Use most “gentle” and effective treatments
- Treatment goals:
 - Relief from symptoms (physical, mental, and emotional)
 - Prevent age-related disease (e.g. osteoporosis, heart disease, cancer)

Naturopathic approaches

- Relief of common menopausal symptoms (in typical order of use):
 - Lifestyle recommendations
 - Nutritional supplements
 - Botanical medicines
 - Acupuncture and Chinese herbs
 - “Natural” HRT

Lifestyle recommendations

- Avoid the “vices” = cigarettes, alcohol, caffeine
- Very important to include a well balanced diet
- Sleep - important to have good sleep hygiene. May need to consult about this with your naturopathic doctor if sleep is an issue
- Nurture relationships
- Exercise:
 - Physical: regular weight-bearing, strengthening, and aerobic exercise
 - Relaxation: abdominal breathing, progressive muscle-relaxation, meditation, yoga, tai chi

Some nutritional supplements

- Bioflavonoids and Vitamin C
- B complex
- Evening primrose oil (?)
- Vitamin E (?)
- Calcium and magnesium
- Vitamin D
- Omega 3
- **Please note:** supplements are always individualized based on the patient's needs. Please consult with your Naturopathic Doctor (ND) to make sure you are taking the right type, correct dosages and to be sure they aren't going to interfere with any medications you may be taking.

Botanical support that may be indicated on a case by case basis

- Black cohosh (*Cimicifuga*)
 - Chaste tree berry (*Vitex*)?
 - Dong quai (*Angelica*)
 - St. John's wort (*Hypericum*)
 - Ginkgo biloba
 - Licorice and other various adaptogens
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- Many of these come in combinations and once again it is important to clarify with your ND if you are taking the right herbs and the proper dosages.

Acupuncture and Chinese herbs

- Identify the pattern based on symptoms and signs (e.g. “liver and kidney yin deficiency”)
- Choose appropriate acupuncture protocol and/or Chinese herbal formula

Natural HRT

- Prescription only (Canada)
- Recommended if the above herbs, supplements and lifestyle changes do not produce reasonable results.
- Biochemically and molecularly identical to human hormone form
- Derived from plants (soybeans and Mexican wild yam)
- Safer than conventional HRT, and effective
- Relatively “new”; long-term research needed

In conclusion...

- In general, menopause is not a “disease” that needs to be treated. Rather it is a condition that may need to be managed based on the impact it has on the individual. The treatment plan is very individualised based on the signs, symptoms and the needs of the patient. Many herbs and supplements suggested and safe, however it is always best to consult a trained naturopathic doctor who can help you choose the appropriate course of action.
- Ideally the patient has done the appropriate blood or saliva hormone testing to determine where the emphasis of treatment should be.