

HEALTH MATTERS

For Your Health

BY DR. RICHARD N. WALDMAN



Keep Cool during Menopause

Hot flashes, night sweats, mood swings, and vaginal dryness are notorious symptoms associated with menopause—the time in a woman's life when her ovaries stop producing eggs

and menstrual periods cease. An estimated 6,000 women in the US reach menopause each day, and most of them will experience symptoms to some degree.

Simple lifestyle changes can help reduce menopause symptoms and lower the risk of disease in the future. Consume a healthy, calcium-rich diet that includes plenty of fruits, vegetables, and grains. Exercise

regularly to improve mood, slow bone loss, and fight the mid-section weight gain that increases the risk of heart disease. Avoid common hot flash triggers such as alcohol, caffeine, hot beverages, and spicy food. Quit smoking. Dress in layers so you can quickly cool down when you feel a hot flash coming on. If vaginal dryness is a problem, try an over-the-counter lubricant cream or gel to restore moisture, especially before sex.

If your symptoms are intense enough to interfere with your quality of life, talk to your doctor. Hormone therapy, which replaces the hormones no longer made by the ovaries with synthetic hormones, is an effective treatment for some women. Antidepressants may be prescribed to help with mood, hot flashes, and vaginal dryness.

Because certain types of hormone therapy have been linked with an increased risk of health problems—such as blood clot, stroke, heart attack, and breast cancer—hormone therapy is not the best choice for everyone. Women who are good candidates for hormone

therapy should take the lowest dose necessary to relieve symptoms for as short a time as possible.

Compounded menopausal hormone therapy (or so-called "bioidentical" hormones) are plant-derived hormones, hand-mixed by a pharmacist and marketed for the treatment of menopausal symptoms. The manufacturers of certain compounded hormones claim that their products offer relief from menopausal symptoms as well as prevention or treatment for serious diseases. However, the US Food and Drug Administration has stated that these claims are false, misleading, and a violation of federal law. Neither compounded nor herbal supplements, such as black cohosh and soy, are regulated by the FDA. Using substances that have not been tested for safety can result in negative health consequences.

For more information, visit pause.acog.org, the website devoted to menopausal and midlife health.

Dr. Richard N. Waldman is president of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

Take Action. Get Tested!

\$20 value

"Where to go, so you know"

Multnomah County Health Department's HIV Community Test Site offers **confidential** HIV testing with or without your name at these locations:

Downtown Community Test Site

Call 503.988.3775 for an appt.

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Portland, 97204

Northeast Health Center

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Tuesdays | 5:30 - 7:15 pm

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Portland, 97211

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Health Department

Se habla español: other interpretation by appointment.

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HEALTH WATCH

Parenting Classes -- Newborns don't come with instruction manuals but parents and parents-to-be can learn about a variety of topics from pain and childbirth to breastfeeding to infant CPR and much more. For a schedule of events, call 503-574-6595 or visit: providence.org/classes.

Cardiac-Rehab Exercises -- A medically supervised exercise program for people dealing with heart conditions. For information, call 503-251-6260.

Stroke Alert Screening -- Check your carotid arteries with a painless ultrasound to assess your risk. Fee \$40. To schedule a screening, call 503-251-6137.

Empowerment through Relaxation -- Free informal meditation classes that address breathing techniques, some gentle ancient African yoga poses and mental balancing techniques-- People have left these classes joyful and with a peaceful view of their lives. We have these sessions bi-monthly-- Call Dr. Marcelitte Failla at 503-228-6140.

Powerful Tools For Caregivers -- 6-week educational series designed to help family caregivers take care of themselves while caring for relatives or friends with chronic illness. Class size is limited, and registration is required. Call 503-413-8018.

Leg Alert Screening -- Check for peripheral arterial disease with this safe, simple screening using ankle and arm blood pressure. The fee is \$40. To schedule an appointment, call 503-251-6137.

Smoke-Free Support Group -- Meets Mondays, 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. For information, call 503-256-4000.

Heart Talk Support Group -- Meets on the second Monday of each month; from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. For more information, call 503-251-6260.

Family Caregiver Support Group -- This topic-oriented group offers a safe place to discuss the stresses, challenges and rewards of providing care to an older relative or friend. Meets the first Thursday of each month at 3 p.m. at Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital.

Chronic Pain Support Group -- Meets the first Wednesday at 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. and the third Wednesday of each month, from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. For more information, call 503-256-4000.

Cholesterol Profiles -- Get the resources to help you keep an eye on your cholesterol and other indicators of heart health. Educational material provided. For more information, call 503-261-6611.