

Emotional Aspects of Menopause

Declining estrogen levels associated with menopause can cause more than those pesky hot flashes; it can also make a woman experience:

- Irritability
- Feelings of sadness
- Lack of motivation
- Anxiety
- Aggressiveness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Fatigue
- Mood changes
- Tension

If you are feeling irritable and sad, there is a good chance it could be related to menopause, but the above listed symptoms are not linked only to menopause. There are a number of conditions that can cause you to feel down right irritable. Tell your doctor how you are feeling. He or she can make sure a more serious condition is not causing you to feel this way.

How can I cope with these emotional changes?

Irritability and feelings of sadness are the most common emotional symptoms of menopause. Often, they can be managed through lifestyle changes, such as learning ways to relax and reduce stress.

Here are some tips that may make it easier for you to handle your fluctuating emotions.

- Exercise and eat healthy.
- Find a self-calming skill to practice, such as yoga, meditation or rhythmic breathing.
- Avoid tranquilizers and alcohol.
- Engage in a creative outlet that fosters a sense of achievement.
- Stay connected with your family and community.
- Nurture your friendships.

Although depression is not caused by menopause, some women do exhibit the symptoms of depression during this time. If you are feeling increasingly unable to cope, see your doctor. He or she may be able to recommend medicine, such as antidepressants, or psychotherapy that can get you through this rough time.

Can hormone therapy ease my emotional problems?

While there is growing evidence to suggest that hormone therapy can relieve emotional symptoms, HT alone is not effective in treating more severe depression. Antidepressant drug therapy and/or psychotherapy may be necessary.

I have a hard time concentrating and I'm forgetful. Is this a normal part of menopause?

Unfortunately, difficulty with concentrating and minor memory problems is a normal part of menopause. Doctors don't understand why memory changes occur with menopause and there are currently no treatments available to relieve these symptoms. If you are having memory problems, talk to your doctor. He or she can at least provide some reassurance.

© Copyright 1995-2010 The Cleveland Clinic Foundation.

For more information or to book an appointment, please contact:

Psychology Department | Cleveland Clinic Canada
Brookfield Place 181 Bay St. Suite 3000
M5J 2T3, Toronto, Canada
Ph: 416.507.6600 | www.clevelandcliniccanada.ca