Menopause Myths We've All Heard Before

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Four Myths About Menopause

1. Hot Flashes Signal a Higher Risk for Heart Disease

Menopause myths have existed since the beginning of time. Some myths traverse many cultures over centuries, while others are local and more recent in their inception. Let's take a look at some current myths and sort out fact from fiction.

Several studies have been conducted in order to explore a possible link between frequent hot flashes and heart disease. So far, studies have been small and results have not been conclusive.

In one study researchers discovered that women who experience frequent hot flashes have thicker linings within their carotid arteries, the large blood vessels in the neck. Thickening of the lining of these arteries is associated with a higher risk of heart disease.

However, researchers disagree about the significance of the findings. Some believe that younger women who experience excessive hot flashes earlier in life may have an elevated risk of heart disease, while others disagree. Researchers are unsure whether or not a link between hot flashes and cardiac illness exists at all.

Other investigators propose that excess hot flashes may be a sign early stage cardiac disease is already present. While some researchers believe women who experience many hot flashes develop heart disease partially as a result of the flashes, others believe hot flashes are cardio-protective.

Another study looked at cardiovascular disease, hot flashes, and insulin resistance. More studies need to be conducted, so stay informed and ask your health care provider if you have questions.

2. Once You Undergo Menopause, Your Sex Drive Diminishes

This is not necessarily the case. In fact, many women feel sexier during and after menopause. As we get older, we generally become more confident in ourselves and our sex lives.

If your sex drive does diminish, it may indicate an underlying health issue, such as a thyroid or adrenal problem. The sex drive may also decrease due to overwork and lack of self-care.

While our mothers and aunts may have looked and acted old once they hit their menopausal years, women today are thriving. We look and feel good. Some of us are naturally comfortable with how our bodies look, while others choose to take advantage of the marvelous youth enhancing products and procedures which abound today.

Whichever you choose, this is a time when you can be yourself and live well. This vitality translates to a healthy sex life. If you feel your sexual drive and pleasure may be minimized, consider the following:

- **Get enough rest**. Fatigue is the most common cause of a decreased interest in sex.
- **Participate in regular exercise**. Your confidence will increase because you will know you look your best. Exercise releases passion-boosting hormones and keeps the vagina lubricated. It also enhances flexibility and increases your stamina.
- **Eat well**. Include healthy fats in your diet: nuts, seeds and cold, deep water oily fish provide compounds needed for the manufacture of hormones. They also keep your skin soft and moist.
- **Indulge in small amounts of high-quality dark chocolate**. It's good for your heart and has proven aphrodisiac effects.
- **Enjoy a sensual bath, preferably with your partner**.
- **Engage in couple's massage**. Use oils scented with pure essential oils. Essential oils that enhance sexuality include sandalwood, jasmine, rose, clary sage and ylang-ylang.
- **Go on a date**. Better yet, go away for a relaxing weekend.
- **Try out some of the new lubricants on the market**. Some are formulated to enhance sexual pleasure. Others replace moisture and make sex more comfortable.

Next page: do we really need hormone replacement therapy for a comfortable menopause?

3. Hormone Replacement Therapy Is Necessary in Order to Go Through Menopause Comfortably

Some women experience discomfort such as hot flashes, night sweats and mood swings intensely and frequently, while others barely notice any symptoms. There is a wide array of options available to make menopause more comfortable.

Eating a healthy diet, getting enough sleep, sharing great times with friends, and engaging in a regular exercise program serve to decrease discomfort and enhance youthfulness. Menopause herbs such as sage, black cohosh and soy can ease menopausal discomfort.

Bioidentical hormones are a terrific, humane option for women who need hormonal support. Herbal therapies and bioidentical hormone replacement is safer and gentler than standard hormone replacement therapy.

Many women mistakenly believe they need to stay on hormone replacement therapy for years, however most menopausal discomforts go away or diminish rapidly after just a couple of years. While hormone replacement therapy is safer than it was formerly, it is still not without risks.

Some women use it to enhance bone and cardiovascular wellness, however safer options are available. Learn about your choices for controlling menopause discomfort, and talk with conventional and alternative health care experts to gain a balanced perspective regarding the pros and cons of each option. By doing this, you will be able to select the best option to meet your individual needs.

4. Menopause Is Simply the End of Menses and the Ability to Bear Children

Menopause impacts your entire body. While reproductive and hormonal changes predominate, "the change" affects every cell of your body.

The decrease in estrogen increases your risk of developing cardiovascular disease. Prior to menopause, women have a lower risk of heart disease when compared with men. After menopause, however, cardiovascular disease becomes the number one killer of women.

The reduction of progesterone levels, coupled with other complex factors, increases your rate of bone loss and you have an increased risk of osteoporosis.

Visual and hearing changes may arise during your forties, fifties and beyond. Your digestive tract may function less efficiently. You also may begin to suffer from more forgetfulness.

Despite these changes, many women are more comfortable with themselves and their lives during and after menopause than they ever were before. We have lived long enough to gain compassion and perspective, yet we are still young enough to live life to its fullest. Enjoy it!