Can Menopause Cause Nausea?

by AFRA WILLMORE

Coping With Menopause and Nausea

One of the least pleasant side effects of early menopause is nausea, which can have a detrimental effect on every aspect of day-to-day living. Cooking, working, and traveling all can be made almost unbearable when you feel sick or are actually regularly vomiting.

Some women are caught out by this little-known symptom. Just imagine: menstruation becomes erratic so you go long stretches without a visit from Aunt Flo. Add in nausea in the morning and maybe some bloating and heartburn, and it's no surprise when some women mistakenly believe they might be pregnant.

For some who either deliberately chose not to have children, or who are glad those years are past, the realization that their "morning sickness" is menopause-induced can be a relief.

For others who yearn for a so-called menopause baby and a last chance at motherhood, disappointment and sorrow can be severe, especially if they are struggling with the idea of menopause and are mourning the loss of fertility.

So Why Are You Feeling Either Premenstrual or Pregnant?

The answer is simply because the same hormones that create physical changes at these times are at play now as you enter menopause. Nausea is most common in the early stages of menopause, known as perimenopause, when hormones fist start fluctuating.

The culprit is usually progesterone. Diminishing levels of this hormone can cause nausea, along with bloating, heartburn and indigestion.

The way to treat your symptoms if they are down to lowering amounts of progesterone is pretty much the same as the methods you would use for nausea with any hormonal root cause.

Treating Perimenopause Nausea

Nurture your digestive system — be gentle with it. Avoid spicy or greasy foods, and try eating bland food in small amounts instead.

Don't skip meals altogether, as this is likely to make the nausea worse.

Cutting out caffeinated drinks might help, too. Swap tea, coffee, sugary and fizzy drinks for water and occasionally good quality fruit juices.

You could try fruit or green teas if you enjoy a hot drink at certain times of the day. If you drink lots of caffeinated

drinks usually, cut down slowly as you could end up with severe headaches.

Other causes of nausea can include stress and tiredness.

Giving Yourself “Me Time”

Take time to evaluate your stress triggers and eliminate or reduce them if possible.

Do you build relaxation time into your routine? Much fuss is made about “me time,” but without some downtime you will soon become sick and exhausted.

Unfortunately, perimenopause often coincides with a particularly hectic time for many women. You might be juggling a job, acting as taxi, coach and cheerleader for growing children, and caring for older family members — all the time trying to deal with symptoms that are inconvenient at best and paralyzing at worst.

Do yourself and your family a favor and use this start of a new stage of your life to give yourself some heath and wellbeing me time.

Exercises to Try

It might be time to introduce Pilates, yoga, tai chi or meditation into your workout routine. Or swap your sweaty high-impact class for a good cardio exercise you can do outside — some fresh air might help with the nausea and will help you sleep if insomnia has become an issue.

Nordic walking, running, biking and climbing are all great forms of outdoor exercise. It’s wise to check with your doctor before starting a new form of exercise, especially if you have previously been more of a couch potato than a gym bunny!

Fatigue and Nausea

If you suspect tiredness might be causing or exacerbating your nausea, take a look at your sleep routine. Keep to regular bedtime and waking times if possible, or go to bed earlier if you simply aren’t getting enough hours a night.

Aim to improve sleep quality. Some people find it useful to write down their worries before they go to sleep — a kind of mental download to clear the mind.

Make sure the bedroom is uncluttered and not too warm or too cool.

Could HRT Cause Menopause Nausea?

What if you are taking HRT (hormone replacement therapy) and, despite your hormones being managed with medication, you are still feeling sick?

It might actually be the medication causing your gastrointestinal discomfort.

Don’t suffer in silence. Report any potential side effects to your healthcare provider if they are severe (or persist longer than three months), and work with them to find a form of HRT that suits you.

There are many types and combinations of HRT and a number of different delivery systems. If your main issue with menopause is vaginal dryness, why not try a topical pessary or cream instead of tablets taken orally?

You could also explore using HRT patches, nasal sprays, vaginal rings or gels.

It might simply be a case of changing the time you take your tablet. Try taking it with food to cut down on indigestion and nausea.

Or it might be that your dose needs to be adjusted. Obviously you should only increase or decrease dosage following advice from your doctor.

The thing to remember that no one has to put up with symptoms like nausea, which can make something as simple as shopping for, cooking and eating dinner feel like an impossible task!