Menopause and Itchy Skin

by ANGELA FINLAY

Skin Problems During Menopause

Once menopause begins, many women see the first signs of hormonal changes in their skin. Dry patches give way to fine lines, itchy flakes and breakouts reminiscent of teenage years. Your skin is an organ and will always be affected by your deeper body processes, but there are ways to counter some of the effects of menopause on your skin. You may not be able to change your hormones, but you certainly can change your skincare routine. Menopause and itchy skin don't have to go together.

Hormones and Your Skin

Estrogen is an important reproductive hormone, but it's also responsible for stimulating processes that keep your body in peak condition on the inside and on the outside. In fact, estrogen is largely responsible for maintaining the skin's natural oils and producing collagen, a protein that lends elasticity, circulation and moisture to your skin.

The onset of puberty brings a big spike in estrogen. You'll experience dips and peaks of this hormone during your monthly cycles over the next few decades. When menopause begins, estrogen production slows, levels start to fall, and its stimulating effects on bone and skin health begin to diminish. The result for many women is dry and itchy skin, beginning with small patches on predictably dry areas, but eventually spreading across the face, back, limbs and genitals.

Good Treatments for Dry Skin During Menopause

Unfortunately, once your estrogen level falls, the change is permanent. However, there are plenty of things you can do to help your skin make up for the loss, beginning with a close look at your diet, habits and self-care routine.

- **Add more good fat.** Fatty fish like salmon and sardines, along with soy, walnuts and certain oils contain a big dose of omega-3 fatty acids, which help to bolster your skin's natural oil barrier, keeping you moisturized and nourished from head to toe.
- **Focus on lotion.** Lasting moisture comes from a moisture barrier, like lotions provide, not excessive soaking in water. Hot water can be especially hard on the skin, stripping it of its natural oils and leaving it taut and flaky. Try shorter showers and baths, and use warm water instead of hot. If you need to warm up your body, throw a bathrobe into the dryer while you're in the tub – it will keep you warmer for longer after you dry off.
- **Use the right creams.** Use a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 every day, even when it's cool and overcast. As for a moisturizer, vitamins are a girl's best friend: keep it simple with natural ingredients, and look for vitamin E or vitamin C on the label, which promises great moisturizing power. Topical retinoids derived from vitamin A are proven wrinkle-reducers, so they're a good choice to combat the fine lines that tend to multiply during the first years of menopause.
- **Stay active.** It's no secret that exercise is great for the muscles, but it's also more important for the skin

than you might imagine. A sweat-inducing workout helps your body get rid of toxins, plus it encourages oxygen and blood flow to the skin, which brings a host of crucial nutrients to the surface to support a firm, smooth, glowing appearance.

If you can’t seem to get your skin issues under control, it may be time to visit a dermatologist for a deeper investigation. Sometimes skin problems can be caused by another hormonal condition or an infection, and it’s important to get to the root of the issues before more complications arise.