Menopause After a Hysterectomy

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Menopause After Complete Hysterectomy or Oophorectomy

The symptoms of menopause develop because the ovaries are no longer working, and no longer produce the female hormones estrogen and progesterone. Many women find themselves wondering, do you still go through menopause after a hysterectomy?

A hysterectomy is a surgical procedure during which all or part of the uterus is removed, which may be performed for a variety of different reasons. Sometimes the ovaries are removed as well, and this is medically known as oophorectomy.

Removing the ovaries and uterus will induce menopause. In this case the levels of female hormones drop abruptly and symptoms like hot flashes, changes in sex drive and mood will be more severe and acute compared with those experienced when the menopause occurs naturally.

If the uterus only is removed, and the ovaries are left in place, the production of hormones will continue. After hysterectomy a woman will no longer have a period, without experiencing other menopausal symptoms (i.e. hot flashes). When the time comes, and the woman goes through menopause, hot flashes, mood swings, vaginal dryness, lack of sex drive, and sleeping issues may occur.

In other words, removing the uterus alone will only stop menses, without causing other menopausal symptoms, which sometimes leads to women being confused over if they will go through menopause after a hysterectomy. Removing the uterus and ovaries will induce all symptoms of menopause, and these symptoms are usually more severe.

There is also another possibility — when a woman develops ovarian failure. This problem can occur before menopause, usually about one or two years after a hysterectomy. Ovarian failure induced by this surgery may or not be associated with menopausal symptoms.

Can You Go Through Menopause Twice?

Menopause induced by the removal of uterus and ovaries is associated with hot flashes that occur almost immediately. There is an intense feeling of heat, followed by a sensation of feeling cold and fatigue. Hot flashes can happen several times during the day and night. Vaginal dryness, mood swings and lack of sex drive may follow. Menopause is also associated with bone loss, with an increased risk for osteoporosis and fractures.

If only the uterus is removed, a woman will no longer have periods, making it harder to recognize when menopause starts. This is especially the case if it occurs earlier than expected and there are no typical symptoms, because the woman will not have periods. In this case, a doctor will order a blood test to confirm the diagnosis of menopause.

Coping With Menopause After a Hysterectomy

After hysterectomy, your doctor may recommend hormone replacement therapy (HRT) in the form of estrogen, with or without progesterone. Since HRT has been linked with serious adverse reactions — such as breast cancer and blood clots — you may want to explore natural alternatives. The herb black cohosh had been found in some studies to help control menopausal symptoms. Plant estrogens found in soy, beans, lentils, red clover and other foods may also improve hot flashes and night sweats.

Adopting a healthy lifestyle is also important – avoid smoking and excessive consumption of alcohol. Eat a healthy diet, with plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, lean meats and fish, wholesome grains, low fat dairy products, nuts and seeds, and avoid highly processed foods that contain large amounts of sugar and saturated fats. Exercising regularly (30 minutes daily) can improve your sleep, mood and hot flashes, the sex drive and keep your bones healthy according to studies.