Raising Menopause Awareness

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The Importance of Raising Awareness About Menopause

Menopause is nothing new, but it's still strange and confusing for many – if not most – of the population. In turn, there's a lot of misinformation out there, and that means there are many women who struggle much more than they need to.

These menopause myths can even be dangerous: since your chances of contracting osteoporosis and cardiovascular disease rise after menopause, it's important that all women understand the physiological and emotional symptoms to expect in order to protect against the risks.

Although your menopause experience won't be exactly like your mother's, friend's or neighbour's, you can use your own experience to help other women – and men – understand the transition better. In the end, changing the face of menopause will lead to better health, and will benefit the medical community.

How Raising Awareness Helps

Menopause is natural, and for half the population of the planet, an inevitable event. However, so many aspects of menopause are misunderstood, and many more are simply not talked about. The result is a confusing, embarrassing, isolating atmosphere for women entering menopause, which often leads to mismanagement and the perpetuation of menopause myths. By speaking up to raise awareness about the realities of menopause, you can help to:

- **Change the view of the medical community.** Unfortunately for women, the medical community still generally views menopause as a disease rather than a natural transition: experts research new "cures", doctors prescribe, and people tiptoe around any discussion of symptoms. Luckily, as more women voice their experiences and bring focus back to *managing* the symptoms rather than *overcoming* them, the more the medical community can respond by:
    - Updating approaches to coping with menopause, like favouring complementary medicine over pharmaceutical symptom relief or hormone therapy.
    - Talking more openly about symptoms and options. The better the communication between doctor and patient, the more supported and at ease menopausal women will feel.
    - Defining the realities and challenges of menopause more accurately. The better collective understanding, the better doctors and other health experts can agree on diagnoses, and eliminate contradiction and confusion.

- **Empower women of all ages.** Any major life change can be difficult to handle, and menopause is no exception. Since menopause is still a socially taboo subject – or at the very least, an uncomfortable topic to discuss – many women feel they have to struggle through the uncertainties and discomforts alone. This feeds the emotional element of the transition; and studies suggest that almost 25% of all menopausal women experience some form of depression.However, knowledge is power. The more women learn the

scientific facts behind menopause, the better they are able to dismiss the myths and judgements, and that will make it easier to cope. While there are many women who've gone before you and are happy to offer support, each experience is personal and unique, and every woman needs to take control of her own health if in order to improve her quality of life through menopause and beyond.

Next page: effective ways to spread the word.

Effective Ways to Spread the Word

You probably have all sorts of advice to give, but since menopause can be a scary, uncertain subject, it deserves a bit of tact. Join up with other women to offer a few good tips on how to get through to the community, and use the most effective resources around you:

- **Get involved with National Menopause Awareness Month**. In recent years, September has been marked as National Menopause Awareness Month, a time to reach out to other women and celebrate innovations in science and technology. Visit the Menopause Awareness Month website for resources to help spread the word and to share your thoughts.
- **Speak out on your blog or webpage**. Post the Menopause Awareness Month badge on your homepage, and link to other helpful menopause sites. Social media is a powerful means of communication, and it's a great way to relay your own menopause story and help others understand how to celebrate rather than dread the transition.

- **Read and share stories**. Exchanging stories is therapeutic, but it's also a good way to increase *your* understanding of menopause. You may find a new technique to overcome your symptoms or a helpful way to explain your issues to your partner or peers. There are plenty of online forums on great menopause websites to connect with other women without meeting in person.

Be Understanding, Positive, and Proactive

Keep in mind that it takes time to break through beliefs and social attitudes. You can't chance the perception of menopause overnight, but that's no reason to simply accept menopause as a necessary and uncomfortable burden. Voice your opinion (even if it's with a slightly deeper voice) and help clear up the confusion for the sake of other woman, and for yourself. You'll find that taking part in the movement to adjust attitudes about menopause is both satisfying and empowering.