

Menstrual Problems

MENOPAUSE AND HORMONE REPLACEMENT

Replacement estrogen has been shown to slow bone loss and to reduce the occurrence of heart disease, but menopausal discomfort is frequently the immediate incentive for a woman to receive a prescription for estrogen. Many women are not at risk for osteoporosis or heart disease when they receive such a prescription.

However, replacement estrogen can increase the incidence of breast cancer and blood clots. It may also cause side-effects such as headache, fluid retention, nausea, and irritability. We therefore feel that estrogen should be used mainly for cases where heart disease or osteoporosis risk factors are present.

The symptoms which occur as female hormones decline are for some women very difficult. But for menopause discomfort without osteoporosis or cardiac risk, we feel that non-hormone approaches should be tried first. Many worthwhile products have been developed, containing concentrated natural ingredients such as herbal extracts and nutrients. These are typically successful with menopause symptoms, and may actually lower one's cancer risk. Acupuncture can help a lot too.

Where hormone replacement is necessary, we suggest bio-identical mixtures which closely mimic the body's own hormone balance.

SEVERE CRAMPS, PMS

These symptoms of excess estrogen usually respond to diet changes, such as reducing saturated fats. Excess estrogen may be buffered by plant phytosterols from herbs and foods.

Excess estrogen production is only part of the story - an equally common factor is inadequate disposal of estrogen by the liver. Herbal and nutritional therapy is typically helpful in improving this aspect of liver function. Caffeine, alcohol, and smoking must be cut out.

Hormone-like substances known as prostaglandins are also involved in menstrual problems. Prostaglandins may be brought into favorable balance by nutritional supplements including magnesium and vitamin B6.

Someone in need of immediate symptom relief may benefit from acupuncture. While pharmaceutical drugs can temporarily relieve cramps and PMS, they may have harmful effects. They fail to address the functional imbalances which underlie these problems, as natural measures do. It is only with nutritional, dietary, and herbal approaches that these problems can truly be solved. At the

same time, there may be positive long-term effects on related issues such as headaches and constipation.

ABSENCE OF PERIODS, INFERTILITY

The opposite imbalance involves inadequate hormones. Here also diet change may be needed. Acupuncture, herbs and glandular extracts can be effective in activating feedback control.