

Skye's notes from the Dr. Yael Swica interview on The Karen Hunter Show (4/24/19):

Menopause: 1 whole year without a menstrual cycle
Ovulation: means you can get pregnant

There are women who thought they were in menopause and they were actually pregnant. It's not common but it does happen. Women often become less attentive to contraception in their 40s because they think they're less fertile and they can actually often end up pregnant by surprise.

Major differences between men and women:

Men – make sperm lifelong and produce testosterone lifelong
Women: born with all the eggs they'll ever have.
It's the eggs that make the estrogen. The eggs age at a different rate from our bodies. The ovaries have their own clock.

Earliest symptoms of menopause:

- mood changes
- increased irritability
- PMS can become worse
- more bloating
- more abdominal fat
- vaginal dryness
- poor sleep
- temperature issues
(especially week before periods; may become hotter)

The average symptoms begin at 47 but can occur in younger years.

What is a hot flash? Where did it come from?

It comes from the brain. It's confused.

Our body temperature is very tightly regulated.

So, we don't have huge fluctuations.

The absence of the estrogen can literally make the brain confused. The temperature sensor area, can make you think you're very hot when you're not or much too cold when you're not. It's not an illusion. You're not imagining. It's very real.

Do all women get hot flashes?

No. About a third of women sail through menopause but that doesn't mean they don't have other associated problems.

When you lose your estrogen, your bones become at risk.

You might experience cardiovascular issues and cognitive issues. Other early symptoms are poor concentration, scattered feelings and unable to get tasks done.

What if you've had a hysterectomy?

If you've had a hysterectomy and even if the ovaries are preserved (they're left behind), the surgery itself can disrupt things and make the ovaries unhappy.

Headaches are another big complaint.

Women, who may have had mild migraines now and then or right before their periods, now have migraines that are out of control.

What can you do?

Use estrogen. For example, estrogen patches deliver a nice steady level of estrogen.

In perimenopause, the estrogen level across the cycle becomes much more dramatic and that will precipitate worsened migraines. Depending on the type of migraines, sometimes going on a birth control pill can be very helpful. Do not take it if you have Aura migraines (flashing lights; visual changes).

If the pill is not the right thing for you, try very low doses of estrogen through the skin as a gel or a patch.

Does the pill increase your chances of getting breast cancer?

Is there a natural way to get more estrogen into your body?

Is there something we can eat?

There's no substitute. Everyone is always looking for a supplement. Your body does not make any of these supplements. Your body makes estrogen.

Low-dose estrogen use for menopause is very safe and the risk associated with breast cancer is very low.

Estrogen alone is not associated with breast cancer risk. It's when it's combined with progestin or progesterone is when we see a small increased risk (information obtained from a 2002 study from The Women's Health Initiative Study on 32,000 women).

Note: Young women do not get heart attacks. They get them after menopause. Usually 10 years after menopause.

Exercise is very important, especially weight training (but nothing crazy). It's helpful for bones and also helpful for calorie utilization. Having more muscles help you burn more calories. As we get older, our muscle mass shrinks.

We might gain more fat but our muscle mass shrinks.

That's a problem because once we lose muscle mass, our metabolism becomes less efficient. So things we used to eat 10 years ago that wouldn't put weight on us,...boom!

Make sure you move! Movement is very important.

Get up every hour and move.

The average age when menopause occurs for US women is 51.

But the good news is that until that happens, you're still making estrogen and that's good for the bones and vitality.

When we lose our estrogen, we tend to gain more abdominal fat (a.k.a. "the spade cat effect"). When cats lose their ovaries, they get big bellies. It's very hard to combat this. It's important to make sure you get most of your calories predominately from protein sources.

Carbohydrates are not your friends.

Avoid simple carbohydrates (bread, rice, soda, sweets).

There is an old diabetes medicine that is used for weight control in mid-life for women. It doesn't affect your cardiovascular system and has been used for decades in diabetes care. It's an insulin-sensitizer.

Your metabolism is working against you.

The loss of the estrogen has profound metabolic effects.

You need a radical diet change.

Gestational diabetes is diabetes that develops during pregnancy (gestation). For women who had that, they are at a higher risk of getting diabetes later. Menopause puts you at a higher risk of getting diabetes too.

Make sure you eat. If you don't eat, it slows your metabolism even more. Vegetables and high proteins. Eliminate the sweets and starches.

Caller complained about horrific hot flashes with sweat and anxiety attacks but afraid to take a hormone replacement because breast cancer runs in her family.

You could take a supplement called Relizen. It's a purified bee pollen with the capsule removed, so there is no allergic reaction to it. No prescription required. You can buy it online. Estrogen is a very good treatment for menopause-associated anxiety. If you're fearful of the estrogen, a low dose of psychiatric medicine, like SSRI or Prozac could be helpful. (the same caller mentioned that the hot flashes and sweats are sometimes 15 minutes apart while she is trying to sleep) You could also use an anti-depressant, anti-anxiety medicine like Effexor or a low dose SSRI with the Relizen together.

Hair loss?

See a dermatologist.

Hair thins in menopause because any hormonal change can cause hair loss but for post-menopausal women, it's usually because of low testosterone. Women make testosterone. Can be treated with a low dose of Replesha (sp?).

Dieting:

The important thing about dieting, is that it's your diet for your life, not just for the next 3 months. If you don't make anything different, then things will go on the way that they are and will get worse. Because that's what aging is.

Women can suffer from hot flashes for up to 20 years. There are some women in their 80s that still get hot flashes. They are associated with cardiovascular problems. Hot flashes can cause changes in blood pressure, skin temperature and all kinds of disruption often accompanied by anxiety and make it really difficult to get through the day.

Stress reduction is very important.

Meditation and yoga are good.

Identify the sources of stress in your life that you can actually do something about. Exercise will help you lose weight and reduce hot flash incidences. Use the Relizen.

Vaginal dryness or pain with sex?

Vaginal estrogen is safe to use.

Also, the hormone DHEA, doesn't cause any estrogen levels in the blood at all. It can be used vaginally as a cream or as a pill. It's totally safe for breast cancer survivors.

Also coming soon, recently FDA approved, Prasterone (brand name:Intrarosa) will also be an option.

Coconut oil is good for lubrication. Make sure it's organic.