

[IMAGE]

## **Dealing with Menopause the Right Way**

By Julie T. Chen, MD

Menopause is a normal part of aging. Although there are other parts of aging that seem more fun than this, there are ways to help ourselves transition through this period with less discomfort.

When we go through menopause, the sex hormone production from our sex organs are diminishing and hence we can feel its impact through symptoms such as vaginal dryness, hair loss, low sex drive, weight gain, depression, anxiety, insomnia and fatigue, just to name a few. And yes, I agree that these are definitely less than desirable symptoms to have, but there are healthy options we can use to try to mitigate these symptoms or prevent them from occurring.

Typically, I recommend to my patients in my integrative medicine clinic, that they should first build a foundation of healthy diet and regular exercise routine. It is also important to set up a good sleep hygiene routine and there are options in regards to supplements to help us through this transition.

A diet that is mostly anti-inflammatory and is mostly plant-based in vegetables and proteins are ideal. Complex carbohydrates that are rich in B vitamins and minerals will help as well. If you have sugar issues, keeping carbohydrates to a lower level in your diet is important. If you have questions about your specific health needs, always check with a registered dietitian or your doctor. Foods that are highly processed, high in preservatives or chemicals and sugars are going to worsen your symptoms. If you are highly hormonally sensitive, you will want to make sure that you eat organic meats and vegetables and wild fishes only to keep chemical and hormone exposures to a minimum.

Exercise is very important to regulating mood, hormone levels, and sleep. So, getting in moderate exercise most days of the week will help you to naturally regulate your hormonal fluctuations and help you to get deeper quality sleep and will help keep your weight under control. Excess fat or weight can throw off our hormonal levels and balance because fat cells tend to have a negative impact on hormone levels and effect.

Making sure you set up regular sleep time and not drinking caffeine later in the day is important in a sleep routine. You want to turn off TV and energizing or anxiety-provoking equipment or activities at least 1-2 hours before bed so that you can slowly prepare your body and mind for sleep. By keeping yourself to a

regular sleep routine, it will help to regulate your sleep hormones and rhythm such that you can slip easier into restful sleep.

Finally, some options you will want to ask your naturopath or integrative physician about are DIM, chasteberry, adrenal supporters/adaptogens, black cohosh, and Schizandra. These are just a few commonly used options for menopause but there are many other options. So, in order to ensure that you are getting the safest and best options for your specific menopause symptoms, I highly recommend you seeing your integrative practitioner for an extensive discussion about supplements that can help you transition through this period of your life.

While it may seem daunting to go through menopause, it is a natural transition in our life and thus there are many options for you to look into for assistance. I want you to keep a strong foundation of good diet, sleep, and exercise in your daily routine; but if that's not enough, ask your doctor about supplement options for your symptoms.

If supplements are not enough and you think that you are going to need hormonal therapy, check into bio-identical hormones with your integrative practitioner or gynecologist. You should never feel alone in this and always keep in mind that there are a wealth of resources for you to tap into, so don't be shy about asking your doctor or local integrative health practitioner about your concerns.

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**Dr. Julie T. Chen** is board-certified in internal medicine and fellowship-trained and board-certified in integrative medicine. She has her own medical practice in San Jose, Calif. She is the medical director of corporation wellness at several Silicon Valley-based corporations, is on several medical expert panels of Web sites and nonprofit organizations, is a recurring monthly columnist for several national magazines, and has been featured in radio, newspaper, and magazine interviews. She incorporates various healing modalities into her practice including, but is not limited to, medical acupuncture, Chinese scalp acupuncture, clinical hypnotherapy, strain-counterstrain osteopathic manipulations, and biofeedback. To learn more, visit [www.makinghealthyez.com](http://www.makinghealthyez.com).

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