

# Menopause Bringing You Down?

The hormonal changes that come with menopause can leave you feeling anxious, angry or depressed without understanding why.

## **Why do I feel this way?**

No two women experience menopause the same. The lucky ones may notice no uncomfortable symptoms. Others may feel like they've got every last one.

The severity and length of symptoms can also vary between women. Symptoms can go on for only a few months or for several years. Most women don't experience a sudden onset of menopause, instead it's a gradual process with symptoms caused by changes in the female hormones estrogen and progesterone due to aging. Menopause can be more sudden if medically induced through medication or surgery.

Menopause symptoms can include:

- Irregular periods.
- Hot flashes.
- Night sweats (hot flashes during sleep).
- Vaginal dryness, which can make sex uncomfortable or painful.
- Urinary problems.
- Sleep difficulties.
- Changes in libido (sex drive).
- Memory issues.
- Mood changes.
- Weight gain.
- Slowed metabolism.

During menopause, you're also at a greater risk for heart disease and osteoporosis. It's common for some women to experience irritability or feel depressed during menopause. Some worry about the changes that are occurring. Many treatment options exist that can help you stay healthy, happy, active and strong as your body changes.

## **How can I control my mood swings?**

If the symptoms of menopause you're experiencing are making you feel uncomfortable, there are medications and lifestyle changes you can try. The first step is keeping a diary of your symptoms. Write down how often they're occurring and their intensity. Share this diary with your doctor. By partnering with one another, you and your doctor can develop a treatment plan tailored to work best for you.

Some things you can do to help balance your mood and ease your menopause symptoms include:

### **Stay Fit**

Determine your healthy weight and do your best to stay there with a combination of exercise and good nutrition.

You typically need fewer calories as you age while still needing vitamins and nutrients. Eating a balanced diet high in fiber and low in fat is key. Make sure you include enough fruits, veggies and whole grains.

Keep active with weight-bearing exercise, like walking or dancing. Exercising for 30 minutes on at least three days per week will help your heart and bones remain strong while improving your mood.

### **Place a Premium on Sleep**

Stick to a sleep schedule that has you waking up and going to bed at the same time every day. Your bedroom should be dark, cool and used only for sleep and sex. Avoid physical activity, caffeine, alcohol, eating and watching TV right before bedtime.

### **Stress Less**

Avoid taking on too many tasks. Set limits and allow yourself to say no. Participate in activities that foster relaxation, such as breathing exercise and yoga. Make time to do things you love.

### **Talk It Out**

Join a support group or talk to friends experiencing similar menopause symptoms. By talking about the changes you're going through, you can get a better understanding of them and feel more comfortable.

### **Ask Your Doctor for Advice**

Ask your doctor about lifestyle changes, medications or therapies that can help ease your symptoms. Hormone therapy is an option for some women with moderate to severe menopause symptoms such as moodiness, depression and anxiety.