



MENOPAUSE

Menopause is diagnosed in a woman when her menses stops for a year. This is due to decrease in hormones caused by slow cessation of ovarian activity. Early symptoms of menopause include irregular menses, sleep problems, vaginal dryness, hot flashes and mood swings. This early phase of menopause is called perimenopause and starts 1-5 years before menopause.

Waves of intense heat with no apparent cause is a symptom of hot flashes. This is due to the reduced levels of oestrogen in the body. There is also alteration of temperature regulation centre in the brain, which is one of the early and common symptoms of menopause. It can be difficult to predict the time and duration of occurrence of hot flashes as it varies in individuals. Very rarely, it can be a result of causes such as hot weather or hyperthyroidism. Most women may not complain about this, while others may need treatment as it can affect their day to day activity.

For instance, the fall in the production of hormones which promote sleep - oestrogen and progesterone - is the main cause of insomnia or the inability to sleep. Also, the temperature regulation centre in the brain will consequently affect the sweat glands and trigger intense perspiration.

There are many ways to relieve the symptoms of menopause. Make your sleeping environment as comfortable as possible. Living in cooler places also helps to promote good sleep. This can be achieved by getting a desk fan to circulate the air moving, using air conditioner, wearing lighter thinner clothes and avoiding beverages that will trigger hot flashes.

Black cohosh, red clover, *dong quai*, ginseng and kava are said to reduce the symptoms of menopause. Foods made with soy, such as tofu, soy milk and tempeh, which contain

isoflavones may balance hormone levels. Your doctor will be able to advise on herbal medication or hormones, if the symptoms are persistent and severe.

If you experience vaginal dryness, it is caused by thinning of the lining and less moisture due to oestrogen deficiency. It causes vaginal discomfort, painful sexual intercourse, and sometimes painful urination. There are non-hormonal jelly available for vaginal application and lubrication. Some may require hormonal creams and this will be prescribed by your doctor as per your requirements. **PRIME**



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Dr (Mrs) Annapoorna Venkat has gained hands-on O&G experience from India, UK, Malaysia and Singapore for the past 33 years. Her experience includes management of high and low risk

pregnancies, adolescent gynaecology and benign gynaecological problems in women.

She was an Assistant Professor with National University of Singapore until 30th April 2015, teaching and conducting workshops for undergraduate and postgraduate medical students and nurses. She have conducted workshops in contraception and in sexual assault for doctors who are undertaking training in O&G.

She has published numerous papers in medical journals and written chapters for books related to O&G. She was the department Patient Safety Officer analysing major safety issues and sentinel events and implemented safety plans. She has delivered educative public lectures and participated in interactive TV talk shows and talks organised by MediCorp, highlighting the essential aspects of Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

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