

Symptoms of Early Menopause and Symptoms of Stress

Physical stress can cause you to stop having your period. Common examples are women who are long-distance runners and women with anorexia. Psychological stress can also disrupt normal menstrual cycles. In fact, some symptoms of menopause and stress are very similar:

- **Pain**
- **Irritability**
- **Reduced interest in sex**
- **Depression**
- **Trouble sleeping**
- **Forgetfulness**
- **Mood swings**
- **Anxiety**

The symptoms of early menopause are similar to those of normal menopause, but may be more severe. Symptoms of menopause may start well before your period actually stops. This pre-menopausal stage can last for years.

Can Stress Spur Early Menopause?

Some of the known causes of early menopause include surgery, cancer treatment, autoimmune diseases, and genetics. The most common and proven risk factor for early menopause is cigarette smoking –most smokers have menopause one to two years earlier than non-smokers do. In most cases, however, the cause of early menopause is unknown. While stress, along with poor diet, heavy drinking, and smoking, may play a role in early menopause, there is not enough evidence to say that stress alone causes early menopause. **Stress can, however, cause you to experience the symptoms of menopause more severely.**

Stress (whether emotional, chemical, or physical) is processed in a part of the brain called the hypothalamus.

Cortisol is designed to control the body's response to stress by stimulating the body to calm down. When there is too much cortisol production or a chronic situation where cortisol is released over a long period, side effects occur. Many of these symptoms include disrupted sleep, poor digestion, weight gain, poor memory, and more.

As a woman, chronic cortisol secretion can contribute to menstrual disorders. High cortisol levels can lead to amenorrhea (stop menstruation), similar to heavy exercise. Excess cortisol creates a faster removal (conversion) of another hormone known as progesterone. As progesterone and estrogen become out of balance, and a woman nears menopausal age, her body often creates numerous symptoms of accelerated hormonal transition. Many women often report vaginal dryness, painful intercourse, weight gain, interrupted sleep, memory problems, heaviness in the bladder, and hot flashes as their hormones become out of balance.

The good news is, as we reduce stress through diet modification, nutritional supplementation, and light exercise we can balance cortisol, estrogen, and progesterone. In this manner, many women find relief to menopausal symptoms without resorting to drugs or surgery. As a woman transitions from an adolescent, through child bearing and later into mature womanhood, she should not have to suffer from hormonal imbalances and symptoms. **Balancing cortisol is one of the many tools we have to help these transition stages to be pleasant throughout a woman's life.**

Do you have stress? Or are you struggling to deal with your menopause? Let us help you do something about it.

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