



mothers of adults Lesson 4

Physical Changes . . . And Other Kinds!

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Moderator: Jan Patterson

*The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime;
and His song will be with me in the night,
a prayer to the God of my life.*

Psalm 42:8

Two-fold purpose of this panel:

1. Awareness. Many women don't understand what is happening when symptoms start. Being prepared can help manage them as well as calm misapprehensions.
2. Encouragement in how to maintain a godly "Titus 2" life in spite of changes you face.

Question 1

Give a brief account of your own history, including pre-menopause or menopause symptoms you have experienced. Include any extenuating circumstances that may have affected this time of change in your life.

Question 2

Did you understand what was happening and how did your struggles affect your family and responsibilities?

Question 3

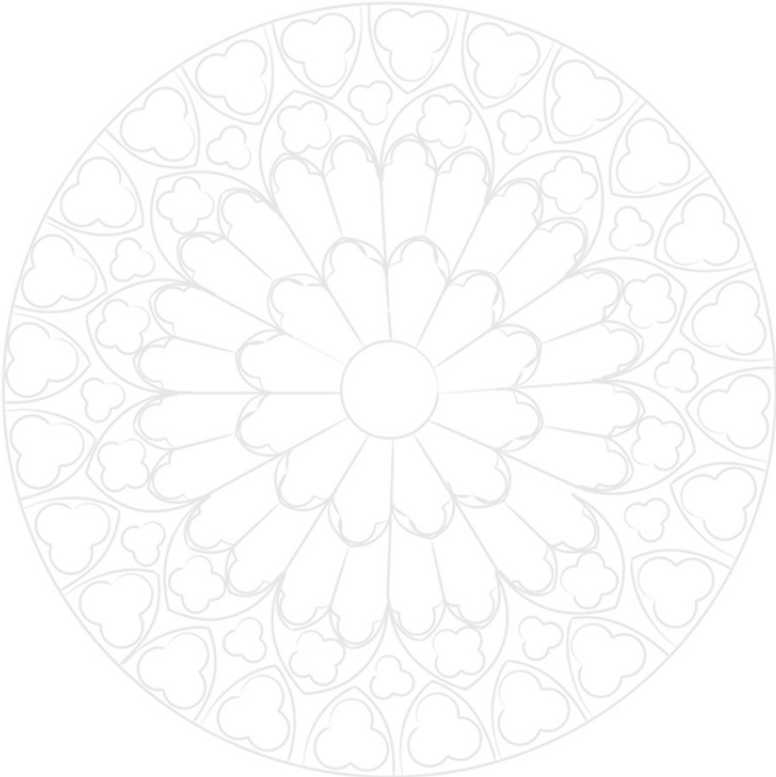
We realize that physical symptoms do not constitute a spiritual problem, but they can AFFECT us spiritually. What have you found helpful in knowing how to handle these strong emotional/mental moods or feelings?

Question 4

What practical things have you found helpful?

Question 5

Our husbands and sometimes our children need to be aware of what we are facing. Have they been able to help you, and what advice would you give concerning how to talk to them without making them uncomfortable?



The Medical Side

Definitions

Perimenopause – the stage of a woman's reproductive life that begins several years before menopause. It is a time of gradually falling and fluctuating hormone levels. These hormonal fluctuations may bring on various physical and psychological symptoms. About 80% of women experience a certain number of these issues, including hot flashes, night sweating, insomnia, mood swings, and irritability.

Perimenopause also entails, at varying degrees, changes in the female body: stopping of periods; changes in skin, nails, hair, bones, and mucous membranes; decrease in volume of mammary glands; greater susceptibility to urinary tract infections; sometimes incontinence. Before stopping, the menstrual cycle is irregular. Almost all women notice early symptoms while still having periods. This stage often begins in the early 40s but sometimes earlier. The symptoms of perimenopause usually last for the whole menopause transition (until the mid or late 50's), but some women may experience them for the rest of their lives.

Menopause – the permanent end of menstruation. It signals the end of the hormonal production of progesterone, the end of ovulation, and, thus fertility, as well as the end of periods. Menopause generally occurs between the ages of 45 and 55, and is considered to be the time when there has been no menstruation for 12 months. In addition to the natural process of aging, menopause may be brought on by other causes such as genetic or auto-immune conditions, or medical situations such as oophorectomy/hysterectomy, ovary ablation or chemotherapy.

Postmenopause – the time of a woman's life following menopause. During this time, many of the bothersome symptoms experienced prior to menopause gradually ease for most women.

Hormones

Our bodies when in proper working order function like well-oiled machines, and the Endocrine System (which includes many glands and organs including the ovaries, thyroid, adrenals, etc.) might be compared to the main engine. The hormones produced in it are a major part of nearly every process of our bodies. They are the chemical messengers of the body that transfer signals from the brain directly to an organ or system for those processes to happen. Therefore their levels in our bodies fluctuate throughout the day as needs change. We are all unique with unique combinations of these hormones. For our concern here we only will mention a few.

Estrogen – part of an entire class of hormones that include estriol, estradiol, estrone. This class of hormones is what makes us women or what gives us our feminine traits. Men also have estrogen in smaller amounts. Most of the drop in estrogen occurs before actual menopause (cessation of periods for 12 months), and this drop is what causes most of the symptoms we think of as "menopause."

Testosterone – yes, we have this too and it gives us sexual interest.

Progesterone – influences moods and emotions but more importantly, the ability to have children.

Thyroid hormones – there are several thyroid hormones, and the thyroid gland plays a role in regulating many body systems including the reproductive system. Menopause symptoms and thyroid symptoms can sometimes overlap.

Adrenal hormones – include estrogen, progesterone, as well as cortisol and chemicals such as adrenalin. The main purpose of your adrenal glands is to enable your body to deal with stress from every possible source... including fluctuating hormones during menopause years!

Menopause Symptoms

Common Symptoms

1. Hot Flashes
2. Night Sweats
3. Irregular Periods
4. Loss of Libido
5. Vaginal Dryness
6. Mood Swings

Changes

7. Fatigue
8. Hair Loss
9. Sleep Disorders
10. Difficulty concentrating
11. Memory Lapses
12. Dizziness
13. Weight Gain
14. Incontinence
15. Bloating
16. Allergies
17. Brittle Nails
18. Changes in Odor
19. Irregular Heartbeat
20. Depression
21. Anxiety
22. Irritability
23. Panic Disorder

Pains

24. Breast Pain
25. Headaches
26. Joint Pain
27. Burning Tongue
28. Electric Shocks
29. Digestive Problems
30. Gum Problems
31. Muscle Tension
32. Itchy Skin
33. Tingling Extremities

Others

34. Osteoporosis

Common Symptoms Before, During and After Menopause

Physical – Hot flashes, insomnia, extreme tiredness, weight gain, headaches, anemia, rapid heartbeat or heart pounding, unexplained itching, decreased sexual desire, heightened sensitivities or "nerves", bone thinning, joint and muscle pain

Emotional – Crying easily and often, easily depressed, flat emotionally, panic attacks, extreme anxiety, fear of being alone, easily irritable, feelings of anger, "personality changes"

Mental – Unusual memory failure, difficulty thinking clearly ("brain fog"), unusual difficulty focusing the mind – even on Bible reading, sermons, prayer, etc.

The side bar contains a list from Mayo Clinic of some of the most common menopause symptoms, although when you hear ladies' stories it seems that the list is basically endless! Whatever you face that is truly out of the ordinary for you could probably be on it. 😊 Also, **sometimes new symptoms show up later, even when you think you are done with menopause.**

Practical Tips for Managing Menopause

Education

- ✓ Ignorance can cause fear, or self-justification, or lead you in wrong directions.
- ✓ Read a BOOK or two. Amazon and the local library are good sources with many choices.
- ✓ Websites, both medical and alternative, can be helpful but are much less detailed than books. Avoid anecdotal, blog-type sites and sites that sell products.
- ✓ Talk to your doctor—ask INFORMED questions, ask for bloodwork, ask about treatment suggestions.

Exercise, Diet, and Other Helps

Exercise – Stretching and bone-strengthening exercises are important at this time of life; walking is simple, cheap, and can be done just about any place and any time. Exercise can be a huge help with menopausal symptoms.

Diet – Small changes, even one at a time, can make a big difference in how you feel. Bad habits will catch up with you eventually, in one form or another.

Other Helps – If you feel you need something to help with symptoms and ease the "downfall" going on in your body, there are many options out there, both OTC and prescription. There is new information and new studies over the last 10-20 years, and research is ongoing. Again, educate yourself, talk to your doctor, and if you aren't comfortable with the answers or results you get, keep seeking.

Remember, menopause is a natural part of how the Lord made us. He gave it to us women, and HE WILL GUIDE YOU. Make it a matter of prayer and see what He will do.

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