

Menopause

It is women who are predominantly but not exclusively suffering from menopause, the symptoms of which are often starting at the age of around 45 – 60 years. Though quite a few people are affected, not everyone experiences the menopause, and some would not notice any symptoms at all. In women, menopause is defined as the total cessation of the menses for at least six months.

What is the background to the Menopausal symptoms?

Menopause is in essence caused by of lack of sexual hormones. Above the age of about 40 years, the production of oestrogen and progesterone in women and testosterone in men gradually declines, giving rise to a variety of symptoms, which differ between women and men.

Symptoms in Women

- Absent monthly periods for at least six months
- Hot flushes and night sweats
- Mood swings
- Depression
- Decreased vaginal secretion and thinned vaginal mucosa, giving cause to painful intercourse and vaginal infections
- Loss of libido
- Loss of pelvic muscle strength with involuntary loss of control over the bladder sphincter muscle, causing unwanted leakage of urine (incontinence)
- Recurrent urinary tract infections (UTI)

Symptoms in Men

- Sweating easily, feeling hot, night sweats
- Mood swings
- Depression
- Insomnia
- Loss of libido, impotence
- Fatigue
- Lack of concentration and forgetfulness

In women, the absence of the monthly period is obvious, they suffer more in general than men who are often ignorant to the symptoms anyway. However men, whose testicles have been removed due to prostate cancer, suffer the same symptoms as menopausal women.

Osteoporosis (decline in bone density) is more prominent in women, as their bone density is normally already lower than in men. With increasing age, women do much more often suffer a hip fracture than men after a fall.

Due to choices of diet and lifestyle, both sexes can suffer from diseases like high blood pressure and coronary artery disease, both conditions are linked to heart attacks. The female sex hormone oestrogen offers some protection against this. With increasing age, and decreasing levels of oestrogen, this protective effect diminishes, so that menopausal women catch up with their men in relation to high blood pressure, coronary artery disease, and heart attacks as well.

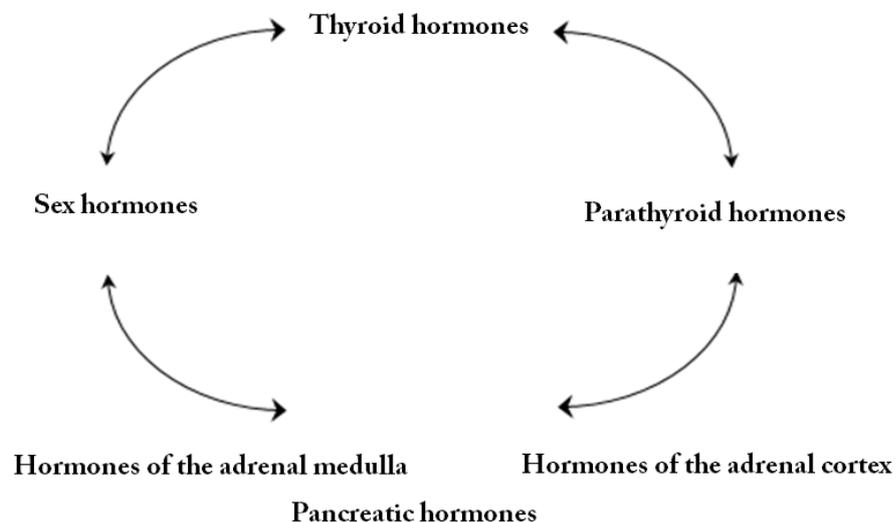
PNEI

Hormones are controlled by feedback loops, which can be interfered with by several mechanisms. These influences can be described as:

- **P** Psychological
- **N** Neural
- **E** Endocrine
- **I** Immune system

Psychological events in the form of stress or other emotional events can influence thalamic and hypothalamic functions, causing an imbalance in their function by either increasing or decreasing their activity. This in turn has an impact on releasing neurotransmitters to influence endocrine organs, which again is having an effect on the levels of certain hormones. As hormone systems are intertwined, this has an impact on all hormonal systems of the body.

However, this also functions the other way around: In Menopause, the ovaries produce less sex hormones, having an effect e.g. on thyroid hormone levels which can be lower as well. Thyroid hormones



are produced by the thyroid gland, which is situated at the front of the neck in close proximity to the windpipe. Thyroid hormones are necessary for growth and proper metabolism, and are vital to both genders. Women however have a greater tendency than men to suffer from thyroid problems, especially *hypo*-(low)thyroid function. Many women experience underactive or hypothyroid issues during the time around the menopause, just as some do during adolescence or pregnancy, the two other stages in women's lives of tremendous hormonal flux.

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)

According to Traditional Chinese Medicine, everyone is born with a predetermined amount of inherited "qi" (energy), called essence ("jing" energy). Prenatal "jing" determines basic constitution, strength, and vitality. It is stored in the kidney meridian, and therefore called "kidney energy". It will reach a fixed maximum already determined at birth at the age of about 20 years. Due to this preset level, it cannot be added to, only conserved and used up over time. The speed, by which this kidney energy is being used up, is strongly influenced by lifestyle and other circumstances. A way to conserve prenatal "jing" is to be striving for balance in all life activities, meaning to be moderate in diet, work and rest balance, and with one's sexual activities. Certain exercises help to conserve prenatal "jing", like "Tai Chi", "Qi Gong" and the likes.

Jing controls all major phases in the development of a human

1. During childhood, kidney energy controls the growth of the brain, bones, teeth, hair, and sexual maturation. With weak kidney energy, bones and teeth will be less strong, and the person may be mentally retarded.
2. During puberty, kidney energy controls reproductive function and fertility, and a normal development into adulthood. Weak kidney energy can be related to amenorrhoea.
3. Conception and pregnancy are controlled by kidney energy, thus weak kidney energy can result in infertility, repeated miscarriages, etc.

Between the ages of 16 to 21 years, the kidney energy will grow slower, and eventually comes to a standstill. After this energy peak, kidney energy will slowly start to decline, and after the age of

about 30 years, this decline will pick up speed. At the onset of menopause, kidney energy levels are already so low that people start losing their hair, losing their teeth, getting tired much earlier and sooner than before, get hard of hearing, suffer from impotence, their bones are growing thinner, and their concentration/memory is getting worse as well.

Next to this inherited “kidney energy”, after birth the body acquires energy from eating, drinking, and breathing. Lungs, spleen, and stomach begin functioning to acquire “qi” from the food it consumes, and the air it breathes. As this energy is derived from the stomach and distributed to the organs by the spleen meridian, it is called “stomach/spleen energy”. To a certain degree, it can replenish wasted kidney energy, but not to the full extend. Working/exercise etc. will first use acquired (stomach/spleen) energy, before using essential (kidney) energy.

According to Traditional Chinese Medicine, menopausal syndrome is not only associated with a decline in kidney energy, but in stomach/spleen energy as well. As a decline in flow of stomach/spleen energy throughout the body will affect the hormone producing organs as well, this will result in a drop of hormone production with all the known consequences of low hormone levels.

Not everyone will suffer from the menopausal syndrome and its symptoms. Depending on individual lifestyle habits, the level of kidney energy can be preserved for longer, so that the symptoms of the menopause may be weaker to absent.

Therapy of the Menopausal Syndrome

In conventional medicine, the first line for menopausal syndrome treatment is substituting hormones in the form of patches, tablets etc. For those patients who don't want to take these drugs, or there is a contraindication to take them, e.g. breast cancer with positive hormone receptors, there are some alternatives listed below:

1. Change of lifestyle
 - a. Healthy diet
 - b. Moderate exercise about 20-30 min per day for 5 days a week
 - c. Sleep / rest 7-8 hours per day
2. Stress reduction
 - a. Autogenic training
 - b. Meditation

- c. Qi gong
- 3. Professional medical help if those points mentioned under 1 and 2 did not have any effect
 - a. Substitution of herbal drugs (e.g. Phytoestrogen), vitamins, minerals
 - b. Harmonisation of sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system by means of complex homoeopathy
- 4. Acupuncture according to TCM

The aim of the therapy is to alleviate the symptoms of menopausal syndrome by re-establishing the PNEI axis, rebalancing energy levels, and by harmonising the sympathetic-parasympathetic nervous system balance.

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