

# Menopause

## Hormones, Lifestyle, and Optimizing Aging



Mary Jane Minkin, MD, NCMP

### KEYWORDS

- Menopause • Hormone therapy • GSM • Genitourinary syndrome of menopause
- Vasomotor symptoms

### KEY POINTS

- The average age of menopause is 51.5 years in the United States. Twenty percent of women have essentially no symptoms, and 20% of women have severe symptoms. One percent of women are menopausal by age 40, and 5% by age 45.
- Classic symptoms include hot flashes (usually early on) and vulvovaginal atrophic symptoms, classically later on. Many women and providers do not recognize atypical symptoms, such as diffuse achiness.
- Hormonal therapy is the most effective intervention for symptomatic relief. Considerable controversy over estrogen usage has occurred over the past 17 years, with major rethinking on the topic over the past 2 years.
- Nonhormonal therapies and topical hormonal therapies are also available for women with symptoms who cannot take or prefer to avoid systemic hormone therapies.

Menopause marks a major transition in women's lives. The definition of menopause, 12 months of amenorrhea (without any other explanations), signifies the end of a woman's reproductive capacity. For many women, this change is liberating, freeing them from anxieties about childbearing, and from pain or discomfort related to their reproductive organs. Some women may view menopause negatively, associating it with aging, which in most Western cultures has significant negative connotations.

However it is viewed, the menopausal transition is accompanied by a multitude of symptoms and health considerations that may affect all women. The introduction of the first hormonal therapy for menopausal symptoms in 1942 forever changed the landscape of menopause. First thought to be a panacea, estrogen by the 1960s was being touted as a vital substance for all women (Dr Robert Wilson's *Feminine Forever*);<sup>1</sup> however, prescriptions for estrogen have gone through substantial shifts over the past 75 years.<sup>1</sup>

---

Disclosures: Consultant to Pfizer, AMAG pharmaceuticals, Duchesnay.

Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences, Yale University School of Medicine, 40 Temple Street, Suite 7A, New Haven, CT 06510, USA

E-mail address: [Maryjane.minkin@yale.edu](mailto:Maryjane.minkin@yale.edu)

Obstet Gynecol Clin N Am 46 (2019) 501–514

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ogc.2019.04.008>

0889-8545/19/© 2019 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

[obgyn.theclinics.com](http://obgyn.theclinics.com)