



Mastering Perimenopause

The Fundamentals Guide To Flourishing in Midlife

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Hey there, nice to meet you...



My name is Dr. Kimberly Ayala Vega, DNP, board certified in Aesthetics and functional Medicine. My mission is to help perimenopause and postmenopausal women regain their confidence through hormone optimization, medical weightloss and facial rejuvenation.



As a woman, I know the struggle to get back to a normal hormonal balance after pregnancy. Hormonal health is not something that is discussed at your yearly check up with your primary care provider or gynecologist. We live in a world where hot flashes, weight gain, depression and low libido is the “norm” because of “aging”. I am here to tell you that I believe you and I trust you. You are not crazy because of not feeling like yourself.

Let's start learning about what arehormones and why do they play arole in our metabolism, emotionsand more.

What are the *biggest* factors impacting how well women age, how they feel during perimenopause, and how likely they are to be diagnosed with a chronic disease in their fifth decade?



METABOLIC DYSFUNCTION

Metabolic dysfunction is triggered by hormone changes and lifestyle factors. It is recognized by weight gain, increase in belly fat, high blood pressure, insulin resistance, inability to lose weight, and pre diabetes/diabetes.



SYSTEMIC INFLAMMATION

Inflammation in the body is responsible for symptoms like joint pain, fatigue, depression, and many more. Unchecked systemic inflammation leads to autoimmune disease and chronic diseases including high cholesterol, diabetes, and heart disease. There is a LOT you can do to decrease inflammation in your body.



DECLINING HORMONES

When perimenopause starts, estrogen is erratic and can be high or low depending on the day; and progesterone can be low compared to estrogen causing additional symptoms. But as time goes on, all of the sex hormones decrease, including testosterone, leading to continuing symptoms of perimenopause including hot flashes, low libido, depression, etc.



STRESS

Stress and how we perceive stress has a major impact on our hormones, immune system, and inflammation. Stress management is one of the most important therapies to hormone optimization and management of symptoms. Stress can worsen insulin resistance, increase cortisol production, and even lead to weight gain.

What are my top 3 supplements for perimenopausal women?



Magnesium

Perimenopause is a time when magnesium is on the natural decline so it's also a good time to introduce a magnesium supplement if you're not already taking one. Most women need about 200-400mg of additional magnesium a day for optimal digestion, sleep, energy, and mood. Magnesium citrate and Magnesium glycinate are the most readily absorbed forms of magnesium supplements.



Omega 3

Not only are Omega 3s potent anti-inflammatories, they have also been shown to decrease the incidence of hot flashes and improve serum cholesterol levels in menopausal women. They have even been shown in studies to improve depression symptoms driven by hormone decline and inflammation.



Myo-Inositol

This one may surprise you! But myo-inositol is a very useful supplement for midlife women because it can reduce overall blood sugar and prevent insulin resistance which both lead to chronic inflammation, weight gain, and Type 2 diabetes which all lead to cardiovascular disease. Cardiovascular disease is the number 1 cause of death in women. The one I use is in powder form and I add it to smoothies or coffee.

Pillars to *decrease inflammation* and maintain *blood sugar balance*; the keys to optimal health and well being as you enter perimenopause and beyond

- *Every meal should include at least 20g of protein, a healthy fat, and complex carbs from whole grain or veggie sources*
- *Avoid inflammatory oils and saturated fats; focus on olive oil, avocado oil, and nuts & seeds*
- *Decrease and manage the symptoms of stress! Stress increases our blood sugar, triggers insulin resistance, and leads to weight gain*
- *Remove hormone disrupting chemicals from your environment as much as possible; this includes plastics, teflon cookware, personal care products*
- *Avoid or limit processed foods and alcohol as much as possible; as much of a bummer it can be, it is imperative for you to feel your best*
- *Don't jump on trends! Not diet trends, loads of supplements, or wild workouts. Consistency and a less is more approach is not only going to be less stressful, it is most effective for long term health and wellness.*

Potent Anti-Inflammatory Foods

These foods can actually combat inflammation and improve symptoms

Turmeric

Use as a spice in different dishes or make a golden latte with turmeric and milk of choice

Fatty Fish & Olive Oil

Foods rich in Omega 3 fatty acids are naturally anti-inflammatory and can prevent chronic disease

Antioxidant rich fruits & vegetables

Blueberries, cherries, peppers, spinach, kale, avocado, walnuts, broccoli



What About My Coffee?

Results in multiple studies show that coffee consumption produces an increase in the metabolic activity and numbers of Bifidobacterium, one of the most active health-promoting bacteria in the gut. They also suggest drinking coffee leads to a more diverse bacterial microbiome in long term drinkers and diversity is a key component of a healthy gut. And a healthy gut is the key to healthy hormones and efficient immune system regulation. If you have significant anxiety, limiting your caffeine intake can be very beneficial.

"Our modern world, our food sources, and our endless levels of stress have set Gen X women up for the perfect storm as perimenopause hits. The slow burning inflammation fire in our bodies combined with hormone decline creates a hostile environment of metabolic dysfunction, blood sugar issues, systemic inflammation, and all of the chronic diseases that follow including depression, diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease. All of that is happening and we don't have an adequate healthcare team that knows what to do or how to help us."

-Dr. Kimberly Ayala Vega, DNP

For many women, perimenopause hits them by surprise. So if this is you, you're not alone. No one taught us this stuff...seriously. You can experience symptoms you may have never had before like crippling anxiety, acne, chin hair, fatigue, irritability, low libido, mood swings, heart palpitations, itchy skin, and cycle changes that are unrecognizable. The list goes on and on. And the symptoms can go on for up to fourteen YEARS. One of the most effective treatments for women in this stage of life that is often overlooked in addition to a healthy lifestyle, is MHT or Menopause Hormone Therapy; you may also hear it referred to as HRT, BHRT, or just hormone therapy. There IS a difference between synthetic hormone formularies and bio- or body-identical hormone therapies. Read below for more information on both types of hormone therapy medications.



Bio-identical hormones

Bioidentical hormones are manmade hormones derived from plant estrogens that are chemically identical to those the human body produces. Estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone are among those most commonly replicated and used in treatment. There ARE FDA approved bio-identical formulations that are available at your local pharmacy and can be covered by insurance. You do not have to go to a private cash based practice to receive BHRT.



Non Bio-identical or synthetic hormones

The hormones used in traditional HRT are made from the urine of pregnant horses and other synthetic hormones. This does not mean the medications used are "bad", it just means they may target less specifically the receptors in the body and can produce more side effects. Other than progesterone vs progestins, synthetic HRT has not been shown to be less safe than body identical preparations.

The decision to take hormone therapy in midlife is one that should be reached through accurate and up to date information, personal preference, and an assessment of your risk vs benefits of doing so that can be determined by your healthcare provider. If your doctor tells you they don't "believe" in hormone therapy, it's time to find a new one. It's not a religion, it is a medical therapy prescribed for disease prevention and quality of life.

-Dr. Kimberly Ayala Vega, DNP

8

THINGS THAT WILL MAKE SYMPTOMS WORSE DURING PERIMENOPAUSE

1

Consuming too much alcohol. Alcohol is inflammatory and has adverse effects on women as they age.

2

Eating sugar and refined carbs like it's your job. Blood sugar imbalance, or high blood sugar, increases systemic inflammation and visceral fat.

3

Not staying hydrated! Water is essential and as we age our bodies are more sensitive to lack of hydration and electrolyte imbalance.

4

Not prioritizing sleep or getting enough. Sleep hygiene and sometimes medication is necessary; your sleep is so important to your well being and has to be a top priority.

5

STRESS. If you do not have a good handle on your stress, it will worsen your symptoms of hormone imbalance, affect your sleep, and cause weight gain.

6

Poor nutrition; if you are not getting enough protein and nutrients in your diet you can experience more fatigue, muscle loss, and blood sugar imbalances.

7

Chasing lab values instead of focusing on self care, nutrition, and lifestyle factors. There isn't a lab test out there that is going to do the work for you or make you feel better.

8

Staying in life situations that are bad for your mental health and are no longer serving you; a job you hate, a bad relationship, or a friendship that is no longer working...let it all go and see how your physical health improves.



*“We know that food is a medicine,
perhaps the most powerful drug on the
planet with the power to cause or cure
most disease.” Dr. Mark Hyman*





For many women the transition to menopause, known as perimenopause, is a time of intense physical and mental challenges that often show up unexpectedly and abruptly due to lack of awareness and education. These changes can have a profound effect on our relationships, our careers, and our health and longevity. With knowledge, guidance, and a lot of self care this time in your life does not have to be unpleasant, but instead a time of personal growth, attention, and increased awareness. It is my passion that women are well informed and empowered during midlife and can rely on accurate information from experts in the field of women's health and hormones.

Thank you for trusting me! I hope you found this information valuable and it empowers you to make the changes necessary to thrive in midlife.

Medical Disclaimer

Yes, I'm a medical provider, but I am not evaluating you in person, do not have your full medical history, and am unable to comprehensively provide adequate medical decision-making on an individual basis. As such, the information I have shared in this document does not replace medical advice from your personal health care provider.

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