Navigating Perimenopause and Menopause

*Disclaimer: No material below is intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.

Understanding Menopause

Menopause

- Defined as the point in time after 12 months of no periods.

Post-Menopause

- The new biological state after menopause, where ovaries cease producing estrogen and progesterone.

Peri-Menopause

Age Range

- Typically occurs between ages 36-45 & can last between 4-10 years.

Hormonal Changes

Menstrual Cycle Hormones (4 in particular)

Follicle Stimulating Hormone (FSH) - Prompts development of follicles.

Luteinizing Hormone (LH) - Initiates ovulation and stimulates estradiol production.

E**strogen (3 Types) -** Estradiol (E2) is the primary type. It is a woman's anabolic hormone and is responsible for multiple body systems. It is primarily secreted in the ovaries. There are over 400 estrogen receptors in the body, which is why any fluctuation high or low seems to have significant repercussions.

Progesterone - Counters effects of estrogen and supports various metabolic functions like brain health, mood, muscle and bone development, body temperature, appetite, and activity.

Common Symptoms

- Disrupted sleep & night sweats
- Heavy Flow and Cramps
- Sore breasts, vaginal dryness
- Weight gain, mood changes, brain fog

For menopause symptom tracking questionnaire and Peri-menopause snapshot tool (for use with your clinician):

Treatment Options

Hormonal Therapies

Menopausal Hormone Therapy (MHT) - Not to be confused with hormone replacement therapy.

In MHT hormones are used as a therapy to help get through the worst of symptoms. MHT is meant to help women lead a normal life, so they are not sidelined by all the changes that are happening with the hormonal perturbation. It is crucial to determine individual needs and weigh the risks and benefits from the different formulations and delivery methods. The current guidelines for MHT state that it is an acceptable treatment for healthy and symptomatic women within 10 years of the transitional perimenopause and it should be taken for the *shortest* amount of time.

It is the most effective treatment against hot flashes and night sweats, and it can help with vaginal dryness, mood, and sleep issues.

It is NOT EFFECTIVE for building lean mass or attenuating fat gain.

Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) - Effective for hot flashes, night sweats, dryness, mood changes, and sleep issues.

Non-Hormonal Options (common)

- Gabapentin - often used for hot flashes
- Anti-depressants - often used for vasomotor symptoms and mood
- Adaptogens - stimulation or depression of nervous system.

Importance of Nutrition and Exercise

Key Recommendations

- Nutrition and exercise are interlinked; building and maintaining muscle is highest priority.

Focus on meals composed of **minimally process, whole foods**. Think: single ingredient foods that come from animals and the earth.

Examples would be: meat, veggies, fruit, nuts, and seeds because they provide adequate macro and micro-nutrients to support both training AND recovery.

- Fuel 2 hours before training and re-fuel within 30-40 minutes post-exercise.

Carbohydrates provide fuel for energy for both your brain and for muscle contractions (glycogen). Protein provides cellular repair and helps tissue recovery. These are the two highest macro-nutrients to prioritize around exercise.

- Increase protein intake.

For increased muscle repair and improving metabolic function, shoot for 1g of protein per 1lb of body weight.

Example: A 150lb person would be recommended to eat 150g protein/day*

*Unless kidney function is limited, as this will impact creatinine levels.

This breaks down to 30-40g protein/meal for 4-5 meals a day on average.

- Focus on high fiber, diverse gut health, and plant-based carbs.

Fiber has three important functions:

1) Feeds the “good” bacteria in your gut.

2) Softens your stool so that it can be eliminated efficiently.

3) Adds bulk to your stool making it easier to pass and improving bowel movement regularity.

Exercise Types

Traditional Methods - long endurance work, periodized training (one block at a time), traditional bodybuilding with limited intensity.

Effective Methods -

- **HIIT (High-Intensity Interval Training) -** Submaximal effort at >80% maximum heart rate, with work intervals >1 minute and rest <5 minutes.

Sample High-Intensity-Interval-Training Workout: (Choose 1 option per station)

1:30 at Station 1 - Options: Goblet Squat, Air Squat, Lunge, Burpee, **1:30 rest**

1:30 at Station 2 - Options: Dumbbell Push Press, Sumo Romanian Deadlifts, Plank, **1:30 rest**

2:00 at Station 3 - Options: Bike, Row, Jog/Run, **1:30 rest**

- **SIT (Sprint Interval Training) -** Efforts >100% of max power output, with work intervals <30 seconds and variable rest.

Sample S.I.T. Workout:

5 min bike warm-up

Complete 6 sets of :16 second max effort sprint on a bike + 1:00 Light recovery/easy pace before repeating.

5 min bike cool-down

- **Plyometrics/Power Training -** Focuses on increasing power and speed, improving muscle composition.

Plyometric/Power Exercise Examples:

- [ ] Depth Drops
- [ ] Box Jumps (w/ step-down)
- [ ] Weighted Calf Raises/Lowers
- [ ] Hex/Trap Bar Deadlifts

- [ ] Med-ball Throws

- **Heavy Resistance Training -** Crucial for maintaining and building lean mass, improving muscle size, and contractions.

General Strength Training Workout:

2-3 Sets of 3-8 Reps of 1 Upper Body Press & 1 Upper Body Pulling

  - Examples Upper Press: Dumbbell Press, Bench Press, Landmine Press
  - Examples Upper Pull: Single Arm Row, Lat Pull-Down

2-3 Sets of 3-8 Reps of 1 Lower Body Press ***or*** Lower Body Pull

  - Examples Lower Press: Goblet Squat, Back Squat, Lunge, Split Squat, Leg Press Machine
  - Examples Lower Pull: Dumbbell Romanian Deadlift, Sumo Deadlift, Sandbag Deadlift, Cable Pull-Through

1-3 Sets of Core Rotation/Anti-Rotation for time or reps:

  - Examples Rotation: Russian Twists, Landmine Oblique Twists, Medball Throws
  - Examples Anti-Rotation: Suitcase Carry, Cable Pallof Press, Single arm Overhead Hold.

Summary

Peri-menopause and menopause involve varied symptoms that need individualized tracking and treatment.

The transition happens in stages, not overnight.

Exercise and nutrition are the most powerful tools to mitigate changes during this phase.

Remember, symptoms are different for everyone and should be managed on a case-by-case basis.