

# Treatments for Andropause and Menopause

by Dr. Jennifer Yap, DO, MPH

**M**enopause is often dreaded by many women. It often signifies the decline of the body and the mind as it brings hot flashes, mood swings, poor mental clarity, decreased libido, achy joints, weight gain and more troubles. For men, andropause (male menopause) can be similar, leading to decreased lean body mass, poor energy, poor sleep and erectile dysfunction. Even in their 20's and in their 30's women start experiencing decreasing levels of testosterone, progesterone and estrogen, resulting in many symptoms associated with aging. These symptoms can affect their overall sense of wellbeing and wreak havoc on their relationships. This does not have to be the case.

Typically, these symptoms are band-aided with sleep and anxiety medications or even with antidepressants. These medications have side effects including weight gain, decreased sex drive, depression and even suicidal ideation. These medications do not treat the root of the problem—which is a deficiency in hormones. Hormone replacement can help with many symptoms. Most women are familiar with the benefits of estrogen replacement. It has helped countless numbers overcome hot flashes, vaginal dryness, night sweats and bone loss. Hundreds of clinical studies have shown that hormone replacement therapy can improve both sexual relations and sleep.

Fewer are familiar with the role of testosterone in health, as less information has been disseminated about its benefits. In part, this is because health insurance companies generally do not cover testosterone treatment for menopausal symptoms. In addition,

the FDA does not consider low testosterone to be a diagnosable condition for women. Testosterone is often considered the he-man hormone, however that is an oversimplification. Testosterone is needed by both men and women.

Numerous studies have shown that testosterone is protective and preventative of many disease states. To name a few, men with low testosterone are three times more likely to get Alzheimer's or dementia than those who are not deficient. Women suffer similarly. Testosterone can also protect against breast cancer. Breast cancer tissue has both estrogen and insulin receptors, and natural and studies have shown that testosterone down-regulates estrogen receptors in the breasts and decreases insulin. Studies have also shown that testosterone can help with hot flashes, energy, libido, weight, lubrication, bone development, cardiovascular health and hundreds of other functionalities.

Progesterone is another hormone that has many beneficial functions. It helps balance estrogen; protects against endometrial cancer; is a natural diuretic; acts as an antidepressant; helps keep blood sugar levels normal and promotes proper cellular oxygen levels, to name just a few benefits. Progesterone replacement also aids relaxation and can help improve sleep.

There are several ways to achieve hormonal balance. There are synthetic hormones and bioidentical hormones. Bioidentical means they are like the hormones in the human body and produce the same physiological responses as those of endogenous hormones. Synthetic hormones are not structured to be the same and often create uncomfortable side

effects. Bioidentical hormones are compounded and created for each individual while synthetic hormones are usually made in specific dosages by the pharmaceutical company.

There are hormone creams, injectables, oral medications and pellets. Oral hormone replacement may have negative effects on your liver since it must pass through the liver. Injectables can create roller coaster effects, giving some people good days and bad days. Some creams are not well absorbed and therefore have mixed results. If placed topically, these hormones can also transfer to clothing or even to other people. Most experts believe the most effective delivery mechanism for bioidentical hormones is pellets that are prepared from wild yams. They generally provide a sustained and steady release of hormone over an extended period of time.

The more we study these vital hormones, the more evidence we have that they protect the brain, breasts, bones and heart, and that they decrease the risk of many age related disease states. If you are over thirty and are experiencing some of the effects of aging, you should consider seeing a physician that specializes in bioidentical hormone replacement. You will enjoy the preventative benefit as well as symptomatic relief of andropause or menopause.

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