

Perimenopause and Menopause

Many women look forward to the time when they no longer have menstrual cycles. However, this transition is fraught with its own set of perils. Studies around the world show women in the western world, with the exception of the United States, have symptoms that are mild and generally last for about a year. Women in the U.S. don't always have it so easy.

As menstrual periods come to an end, the ovaries stop producing estrogen. The adrenal glands produce androstenedione, a hormone that is converted by an enzyme in fat cells into estrogen. This keeps the estrogen level elevated enough so that the body gradually accepts the new lower level. Some symptoms are normally experienced for a few months while the body makes this transition. There are several reasons why this process goes wrong in the United States. When the body is under stress (not just what we think of as stress but any chronic irritant; emotional, dietary, allergies, infections and more) the adrenal glands are over-taxed and become exhausted. We see exhausted adrenals in a large majority of our female clients even at a young age. When the adrenals are exhausted, they are unable to make enough estrogen precursors. The precipitous drop in estrogen causes several things to happen:

1. **The body produces inflaming chemical messengers**- inflammation may cause or contribute to depression with low neurotransmitters, bone loss, high blood pressure and worsening of existing health issues such as arthritis, allergies and auto-immune disorders
2. **Dryness and low libido**
3. **Acne and facial hair growth**
4. **Mental fogginess**

Women experience hot flashes, migraines, mood swings and more as a result of the fluctuation in estrogen. Her doctor may prescribe estrogen replacement hormones, anti-depressants and medications for bone density loss and blood pressure. Like an aspirin, these prescription drugs only treat the symptom and do not address the underlying inflammation which will continue to wreck havoc if not treated.

At Smithson Clinic, we look to find what is driving your symptoms. Each woman's body and lifestyle is unique. Honoring and working with that individuality results in a more comprehensive and effective plan of action to bring you into a state of health.