

MENOPAUSE 101

The information I wish I
knew 10 years ago



LET'S TALK

- PEREMENOPASE
- SIGNS
- ADVOCATE
- HOPE
- HRT
- DIET
- EXERCISE
- SUPPLEMENTS
- MINDSET
- LEARNING

PERIMENOPAUSE

It's not an off and on switch

There is a slow progression towards menopause and this time is called perimenopause. During this time our ovaries slowly reduce the amount of hormones and its not a linear line- rather think of it as a second puberty- its kind of all over the place until it settles down.

We all experience this time differently. Its a natural process to go through and isn't a disease to be cured but something for us to manage if its negatively impacting on our lives. Each women will know what she can and can't cope with. Seek out help when you feel like its impacting on your ability to be the person you want to be. For me, I felt I wasn't parenting my teens and modelling good health the way I wanted to.

SIGNS

It's not just irregular periods

You could be one of the 20% who get no signs, but you could also be experiencing:

- Weight gain in tummy area
- Achy joints/Libido changes
- Forgetfulness
- Anxious/Depressive weeks
- More common headaches
- Waking up and not getting back to sleep
- Needing to pee alot
- Sore boobs/Acne/Heavy periods/Thinning eyebrows
- Hot flushes/Night sweats
- Not recovering from HIIT style workouts like you used to
- Injuring yourself easily working out
- Crawling sensation on skin

ADVOCATE

You need to speak up

I went to the Doctor at least 10 times to discuss issues I was experiencing and not once was it suggested they could be perimenopause related. I had x-rays, scan and immune testing for my achy hand joints, I was anaemic and had iron transfusions. I had migraine medication changed and melatonin prescribed for sleep.

The best learning I have done is self taught through menopause advocates online, podcasts, books and now my Menopause Accreditation. I now see a different doctor at our practice who is interested in menopause and I arrive with my notebook of requests.

HOPE

You can anchor yourself again

I felt like everything was moving underneath me. Clothes didn't fit the same, a glass of wine to unwind gave me a migraine and my favourite exercise methods exhausted me but yet I still woke up between 2-4am sporadically.

My skin started to look like a teenager, my hair suddenly needed washing most days and occasionally "is it just me or is it really hot in here" phrases started to come out of my mouth. I oscillated between loving my life and wanting to run away.

Understanding what was happening to me and starting to take positive steps to manage it, anchored me again.

HRT IS OKAY

Be wary of what you read

HRT used to be made from pregnant horses urine (!!) but nowadays its made from body identical hormones. This means they are identical to the hormones your body would naturally produce. The safety of these has been tested for couple of decades.

From the 90's we were told HRT increased our risk of breast cancer and if you have this in your family you are right to raise it with your doctor. But did you also know that modern HRT is safer than moderate alcohol intake when it comes to increasing breast cancer risk.

DIET

You are what you eat and drink

Eat lots of protein-it keeps you full and helps regulate your appetite. Consider meat, eggs, cheese, powders.

Aim for 30g per meal.

Focus on whole foods and be aware of carbohydrate intake as our bodies tend to store it as fat and not use it as well as an energy source anymore.

Dairy and Gluten can start to cause problems- approx 1/3 of us develop intolerances to these.

Drinks: Your body works best when you reduce alcohol and caffeine. Consider electrolytes as we can lose our thirst triggers and dehydration hits us hard.

EXERCISE

Exercise is your best friend and how you approach it will make or break your next decade (literally).

Bone density is a huge concern and strength training is going to help us hold onto all the bone strength we have.

Lift less but heavier-be careful of long high rep workouts

High Intensity is great for us, but only 45 mins a week

Walking is a super power, get your regular steps in.

Exercising fasted can cause problems, so consider 1/2 banana before and protein straight after to help with recovery.

Showing up to move regularly doesn't look like a robot of perfection, instead its 1/3 awesome workouts, 1/3 okay and 1/3 of them you might have to cut short or take it to a gentle walk/stretching and that's okay.

SUPPLEMENTS

Spend your money on the right ones

Magnesium- sleep, muscles relaxation, stress

Glycine- Cool body temp, brain fog, calming

B12 brain fog, energy, depression, anxiety

Choline- brain fog, memory, attention

Ashwaganda- anxiety and hot flushes

Collagen: helpful if you are strength training

Creatine: if you are strength training this is a must

Black Cohosh/Passionflower: Hot flushes

Rhodiola: fatigue, anxiety, depression

Valerian, St Johns Wort- sleep, stress

Check your doses. Often what you buy over the counter in a "menopause" mix isn't strong enough to help. Also check interactions with any other medicine you are on.

MINDSET

It's not all bad

It's really easy to fall down a rabbit hole of scary information about menopause. Lots of articles and books focus on the negative aspects and it can all feel a little hopeless. Combine this with constant focus on youth in our culture and you can really start to feel that you have nothing to offer the world anymore- when it's actually the opposite.

For me, once I got my body under control, I felt like my life was truly starting.

My parenting shifted to a new level with older teens, my fitness and strength is steady, and I'm starting to step into the fullness of who I am at this age.

Don't settle, don't give up. Keep chasing vitality- it's yours for the taking.

LEARN

So many awesome experts out there

Look for podcast interviews/blogs and websites featuring Dr Lara Briden, Dr Mikki Williden, Dr Stacy Sims. Also check out the Petra Bagust- Grey Areas Podcast- have you laughing, crying and everything between as you hear from a variety of women. I loved it as it was filled with hope.

NZ informational books:

This changes everything by Niki Bezzant

Don't sweat it by Nicky Pellegrino

Next Level by Dr Stacy Sims (exercise/food focused)

Making sense of menopause: harnessing the power and potency of your wisdom years by Susan Willson (a more poetic look at this season)

WANT MORE?

My reason for talking more about menopause is because I see the impacts of it on the leaders I work with.

Anything that affects us affects our work. We might be tired, less likely to cope with what life throws at us, and if you are like me, starting to freak out that I have early onset dementia due to my forgetfulness!

And for the men out there, understanding what is going on for those in your life is really important too. Knowing how to have conversations that connect matters.

I can be found at penny@creativeleadership.co.nz or message me via LinkedIn for a chat.