

Green Medicine for Menopause

Herbs to
the Rescue!

by Julia Woodford

An estimated 3 million Canadian women (1 in 6) will reach menopause over the next decade. In fact, these women will spend half of their adult lives in menopause. Whether this time of great change in a woman's life is experienced as a welcome transition into deep maturity, or dreaded as a slippery slope towards old age, depends on how well she avails herself of the tools available in nature's pharmacy.

Help for Exhausted Adrenals

Some health care experts believe that the most common cause of menopausal symptoms is adrenal exhaustion. By mid-life, many women are feeling the cumulative effects of a life spent juggling the demands of work and family, and their adrenal glands are burning out. It is believed that abnormal adrenal function shows up during menopause in the form of hot flashes, brain fog, moodiness, dizziness, aching body, and loss of sexual responsiveness. Many women find that supporting the adrenal glands and balancing their hormone system with natural health remedies, acupuncture, bodywork and other therapies during menopause is key to improving the experience:

- Acupuncture can improve deficiencies in 'kidney yin chi', which will then strengthen adrenal function.
- Foods that build kidney yin include mung beans, string beans, black beans, lentils, wild rice, millet, barley, parsley, asparagus, seaweed, raspberries, blackberries and blueberries.

Susun Weed, author of *Menopausal Years: The Wise Woman Approach*, believes that mid-life anxiety and stress can clobber the adrenals which in turn gives rise to menopausal symptoms. To calm the mind and body, she recommends daily exercise to blow off stress: "Yoga postures, yogic breathing, and quiet focused meditation tonify (and soothe) the sympathetic nervous system. Regular practice alleviates anxiety, often permanently."

Sometimes all it takes is a walk in the park, doing slow deep breathing along the way, to calm the mind, refresh the adrenals, and relieve menopausal symptoms naturally. Hot flashes can be viewed as a signal to slow down, retreat, and take time out for oneself.

Adrenal exhaustion can also cause insomnia and sleep disturbances, resulting in a lack of deep rest needed for healing. To improve your odds of a good sleep:

- Don't eat heavy foods after about 7 pm, especially meat, as the digestive process can cause insomnia and disrupt sleep late at night. Instead, choose a light healthy snack if you get the evening munchies (Black Sesame seeds or Nettle soup are yin-nourishing snacks).
- Move all sources of EMF away from the bed or even out of the bedroom, as these tend to overstimulate or aggravate the nervous system (i.e. computers, cellphones, radios, clocks, etc.).

Herbal Allies for Hormone Balancing

According to Andrea Fleetwood, RNCP, RHN, the natural way of working with the process of peri-menopause and menopause, and minimizing the discomforts associated with it, is to restore hormonal balance naturally. She uses herbal medicines which are backed by a long history of use in folklore medicine combined with modern research:



Black Cohosh

Black Cohosh has a long-standing reputation as a remedy for the treatment of “female complaints.” Root extracts were used by Cherokee and Iroquois Indians to relieve pain; treat rheumatism, coughs, and colds; as a gargle for sore throat; and to treat menstrual irregularities.

It has been used for decades in Germany to treat menopause symptoms. In fact, the German Commission E (equivalent to the U.S. FDA) has done extensive testing under government supervision to determine the efficacy and safety of hundreds of herbal products. Black Cohosh has received an approval status by this Commission. This approval states that black cohosh is safe when used according to prescribed dosage and helpful for premenstrual discomfort and menopause symptoms. A recent study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* found that black cohosh has benefit in relieving hot flashes and other menopause symptoms.

More research, reported on iherb.com, indicates: “In a double-blind, placebo-controlled study, 97 menopausal women received black cohosh, estrogen, or placebo for 3 months. The results indicated that the herb reduced overall menopausal symptoms (such as hot flashes) to the same extent as the drug (estrogen). In addition, microscopic analysis showed that black cohosh had an estrogen-like effect on the cells of the vagina. This is a positive result because it suggests that black cohosh might reduce vaginal thinning. However, black cohosh did not affect the cells of the uterus in an estrogen-like manner. Finally, the study found hints that black cohosh might help protect bone.



Red Clover

Red Clover is a species of clover, native to Europe, western Asia and northwest Africa, but planted and naturalized in many other regions. It is an herbaceous, short lived perennial plant, variable in size, growing to 20–80 cm tall.

Modern scientific tests have shown that red clover contains isoflavones, plant-based chemicals that produce estrogen-like effects in the body. Isoflavones have shown potential in the treatment of a number of conditions associated with menopause, such as hot flashes, cardiovascular health, and osteoporosis.

Controlled clinical trials show that phytoestrogens from red clover help to maintain proper bone density in menopausal women, as well as relieving hot flashes and night sweats. Red clover is also recognized as a detoxification herb or “blood cleanser”.



Gamma-Oryzanol

Gamma-Oryzanol may reduce symptoms of menopause including hot flashes. It is a sterol-like structure, a mixture of ferulic acid esters of sterols and triterpene alcohols, extracted from rice bran oil and other grain oils such as corn and barley. It serves as an important antioxidant within plant cells. Ferulic acid compounds are also present in many foods including oats, berries, citrus fruits, tomatoes, olives, and vegetables. Sterols are the group of compounds found throughout the plant kingdom,

The LIQUID Advantage

Most of us are familiar with taking supplements in tablet or capsule form. Few are familiar with what Europeans have known for close to one hundred years—the advantages of supplementing in liquid form. Liquid supplements provide enhanced availability, as they do not require breakdown by the digestive tract before the active ingredients can be released and absorbed. Liquids also have a much larger surface area to volume ratio that allows for contact with a greater number of absorption sites in the digestive tract. The average person will receive 20% of what is available from a tablet, 30% from a capsule and 98% from a liquid solution.¹ Liquid solutions are highly soluble and extremely efficient at providing nutrients. Therefore, you can use lower doses compared to solid supplements.

1. The Physician's Desk Reference, p.1542

with many vital biological functions.

Gamma-Oryzanol appears to act on the hypothalamus and pituitary glands, assisting in regulating these hormones. Studies show that Gamma-Oryzanol has also displayed a mild anti-inflammatory and anti-anxiety effect in animal models.

Japanese studies suggest that Gamma-Oryzanol may be useful in treating the symptoms of menopause. In one study, women who had undergone a hysterectomy, which is the equivalent of surgical menopause, were instructed to take 100 mg of Gamma-Oryzanol three times daily. Over half of the women reported a 50% reduction in menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes. Another study gave 40 women 300 mg of Gamma-Oryzanol daily for 4 to 8 weeks. On a survey, 80 to 85% of the women felt that their symptoms had “generally recovered.”



Maca Root

This nutrition-packed root vegetable, also known as “peruvian ginseng,” is reputed to increase energy and physical stamina while nourishing the endocrine glands and alleviating menopausal symptoms. It is rich in amino acids, phytonutrients, vitamins, and minerals, and has been used as a traditional source of both food and medicine by indigenous people since the time of the Incas. Maca is a powerful adaptogen (an agent that assists the body to find balance) that has long been used to treat menopausal symptoms and is now being prescribed by some health practitioners as a safe alternative to HRT.

According to Andrea Fleetwood, “Maca’s reputation as a powerful enhancer of strength and stamina and as a libido-fertility herb goes back more than 500 years, and today it is gaining worldwide attention. From a nutritional standpoint, maca is rich in natural sugar, proteins, starches, and important minerals such as iron, magnesium, calcium, and phosphorous.”



Sage

Sage is a small perennial evergreen subshrub, with woody stems, grayish leaves, and blue to purplish flowers. It is a member of the family Lamiaceae and is native to the Mediterranean region, though it has naturalized in many places throughout the world. It has a long history of medicinal and culinary use, and in modern times as an ornamental garden plant. The German Commission E lists sage leaf tea for treating excessive perspiration. Menopausal women popularly use the tea to treat hot flashes and night sweats under the direction of Medical Herbalists in the United Kingdom. In one 4-week open study, eighty patients suffering from excessive perspiration were treated with half of the group

taking 440 mg aqueous dry extract of sage (equivalent to 2.6 grams of dry leaf) and the other half drinking sage leaf tea using 4.5 g leaf daily. Perspiration was reduced to less than 50% in both groups, with the aqueous dry extract somewhat stronger.



Chaste Tree Berry

This large shrub is native to Southern Europe and the Mediterranean. Also referred to as Vitex, it has traditionally been used in European folklore medicine for hemorrhaging following child-birth, as well as menstrual regulation.

Modern research has confirmed its use for menstrual regulation, and the berries are now widely used by herbalists to restore balance and function to the female reproductive system by stimulating the natural production of progesterone.

Vitex, like many other herbs, exerts a normalizing influence on the body, restoring that which is absent, and constraining excessive tendencies. Vitex influences the pituitary gland, reducing the production of certain hormones and increasing the production of others. Vitex encourages the pituitary gland to produce luteinizing hormone. This increases progesterone production and helps regulate a woman's cycle.

Vitex has been used with great effect in restoring absent menstruation, regulating heavy periods, restoring fertility when caused by hormonal imbalance, relieving PMS tension, and easing the changes involved with menopause. Overall, Chaste Tree Berry has reported having a normalizing effect on the hormonal system.



Schizandra

Schizandra is known in Chinese medicine as "wu wei zi", which means 5-flavoured herb. Because of its history of use in Traditional Chinese Medicine, schizandra is considered one of the elite herbs of the Chinese system of herbalism. In ancient times it was considered the quintessential tonic herb and master of the five elements.

Schizandra is a powerful adaptogen said to be youth-preserving and beautifying. It is also reputed to be an excellent sexual tonic, a blood purifier, memory improver and liver cleanser.

Schizandra is considered a mild sedative that exerts a soothing and quieting effect on the body, and has been helpful in cases of insomnia, stress, dizziness, motion sickness, excessive sweating, headache, heart palpitations, anxiety and other problems associated with emotional stress. Schizandra appears to play a great role in the regulation of symptoms associated with menopause.

Overall, these herbs are currently the most widely used green medicines for relief from the symptoms of menopause. With judicious use of botanical remedies, most women will find that cessation of menses can be an enjoyable and empowering experience. Consult a health professional to help determine which combination is right for you.



"After about two days of taking Nutri MENO liquid I noticed a major change. My heavy duty hot flashes had gone completely. I stopped waking up in the night to a soaked pillow. It is wonderful!"

Pam S.

"I have slept like a baby every night since I started taking Nutri MENO. I take one tablespoon at bedtime. I no longer have any daytime hot flashes or night sweats. Thank you... thank you... thank you!"

Sherri C.



Sources:

Carroll DG. Nonhormonal therapies for hot flashes in menopause. *Am Fam Physician*. 2006; 73(3): 457-64; Lee Reaff, Nancy M.D. Perimenopause: Preparing for the change. Prima Publishing; 1995; LaValle JB, Krinsky DL, Hawkins EB, et al. *Natural Therapeutics Pocket Guide*. Hudson, OH:LexiComp; 2000:425-426; Robert Arking, *The Biology of Aging* (3rd Ed), Oxford University Press:2006; Smolinske A. Dietary supplement-drug interactions. *J Am Med Womens Assoc*. 1999;54(4):191-196; Upmalis DH et al., *Menopause*. 2000 Jul-Aug;7(4):236-42; Williamson JS, Wyandt CM. An herbal update. *Drug Topics*. 1998;142(6):66-75. 'NEW' MENO-PAUSAL YEARS: *The Wise Woman Way*, by Susun Weed, Ashtree Publishing 2002, www.ashtreepublishing.com

Murase Y, Ishihara H. Clinical studies of oral administration of gamma-oryzanol on climacteric complaints and its syndrome. *Obstet Gynecol Pract*. 1963;12:147-9.

Ishihara M, Ito Y, Nakakita T, et al. Clinical effect of gamma-oryzanol on climacteric disturbance on serum lipid peroxides. *Nippon Sanka Fujinka Gakkai Zasshi*. Feb 1982; 34(2): 243-51.

Wuttke W, Seidlova-Wuttke D, Gorkow C. The Cimicifuga preparation BNO 1055 vs. conjugated estrogens in a double-blind placebo-controlled study: effects on menopause symptoms and bone markers. *Maturitas*. 2003;44 (suppl 1): S67-S77.

**There are
better ways to**

**STAY
COOL**

**during
Menopause**



Nutri MENO™ is a great-tasting liquid formula designed to help fight the symptoms of menopause. Say “good-bye” to hot flashes, night sweats and mood swings! This all-natural liquid features a powerful combination of herbal ingredients to help you keep your cool day or night.

- Helps to relieve hot flashes, night sweats and the symptoms of menopause.
- Aid to ease nervous tension.
- Features the herbal benefits of Black Cohosh, Sage, Gamma-Oryzanol, Chaste Tree, Maca & Schizandra.
- Acts as a hormone normaliser to help stabilize menstrual cycle irregularities.

**Great Natural
berry flavour**



Naka
original

NakaHerbs.com

Live well and live healthy with Naka herbs and vitamins