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## **Managing Menopausal Symptoms**

**By: Dr. Stephen O'Neil**

Dear Dr. Steve: I have recently stopped taking hormone replacement therapy and I am suffering many side effects. Is there anything Chiropractors can do to help with hot flashes and other symptoms of menopause?  
J.F. Cottam

Dr. Steve: Some women experience symptoms at the onset of menopause such as hot flashes, night sweats, nervousness, anxiety or irritability. Menopause is a term used to describe the end of menstruation. This occurs in most women between the ages of 40 to 60. The symptoms may appear in the years leading up to menopause and last for years after. The cause of these symptoms is due to the sharp decline in estrogen levels associated with the decreasing function of the ovaries.

Treatment options have only recently increased as research in several areas has improved. Conventional medical treatment has always been hormone replacement therapy (HRT). This consists of estrogen and progesterin supplements given orally or through a skin patch. This treatment has become controversial lately as more studies emerge showing potentially serious side effects with this treatment. Many doctors and women such as yourself are now opting for less dangerous alternatives. The problem with these synthetic hormones, is that they do not match human hormones and carry an increased risk of heart disease, breast cancer and dementia. Estrogen, when given in improper dosages causes an increased risk in endometrial cancer and uterine cancer.

Chiropractors cannot directly treat patients for menopausal symptoms. However, as I have said before, every function of the body is controlled by the central nervous system. Chiropractors align the spine to remove pressure and interference from the central nervous system, allowing it to express itself freely and function optimally, thereby normalizing the function of the body. Some women have experienced a decrease in menopausal symptoms with regular chiropractic visits. Chiropractic works best when combined with some of the other natural treatment options.

Nutritional supplementation and dietary changes seem to have the greatest success in providing relief for hormone imbalances. Vitamin E promotes a healthy circulatory system and may reduce hot flashes. Vitamin B helps relieve depression, insomnia and irritability. Calcium, Vitamin D, Zinc and Chromium help prevent osteoporosis. Soy and flaxseed contain phytoestrogens, which are compounds that can stimulate estrogen receptors in the body. These phytoestrogens are very helpful because they have both estrogen increasing and estrogen decreasing ability and will help the body balance to the proper level. The Chinese herbs dong quai and Asian ginseng also have high levels of phytoestrogens. Black cohosh has also been shown to decrease hot flashes and normalize estrogen levels. Acupuncture treatments have also been used to suppress hot flashes and other menopausal symptoms.

Unfortunately, there is not one simple treatment that works for 100% of women 100% of the time. A combination of treatments and some dietary and lifestyle changes are generally the best approach. Increasing exercise, which promotes proper cardiovascular and circulatory health, is always a wise choice. Consult your Chiropractor to explore which possible treatments regarding menopausal symptoms are right for you.