



MENOPAUSE

Lifestyle tips, self help measures and natural alternatives to HRT

- Hot Flashes:** Avoid ~ heat e.g. very hot baths and showers, spicy food
~ alcohol, caffeine, smoking.
- Wear layers of clothing that can be removed easily as soon as a flush starts.
Hand-held fans can help. Moist wipes may be useful.
- Night Sweats:** Avoid synthetic night clothes and bedclothes. Avoid heavy bedclothes.
Sleep on a big towel to absorb sweats.
- Anxiety / Palpitations:** Deep, slow breathing; yoga; suitable exercise; reduction in caffeine intake can help.
- Exercise:** Regular vigorous exercise will help reduce the frequency and intensity of hot flashes and sweats (e.g. 4 x 30 minute sessions per week). Choose a form of exercise that you enjoy and will continue with in the long term.
Exercise helps control weight gain.
It also lifts mood and helps prevent heart disease and osteoporosis.
- Alcohol:** Watch your intake. More than 2 units daily may double the risk of breast cancer. Alcohol can damage bones.
- Weight:** Obesity, i.e. BMI (body mass index) of 35 and over, may treble the risk of breast cancer.
- Smoking:** **Stop.** It greatly increases the risk of heart disease and it interferes with absorption of calcium from the gut.
- Aromatherapy:** Essential oils of lavender and camomile are calming and lavender is good for insomnia. Essential oil of rose is uplifting and good for countering low mood and insomnia.
- Homeopathy, acupuncture, reflexology and massage can help relax muscles and relieve stress. Yoga and Pilates can be beneficial for some women by producing a calming effect.
- Diet:** Phyto (plant) oestrogens e.g. soya products, beans, lentils, cereals, Burgen bread and linseeds can supplement falling levels of oestrogen. Linseeds also provide the essential fatty acids omega 3 and omega 6.
Plant oestrogens can be bought in tablet form.
Oily fish should be eaten twice weekly to increase levels of omega 3.
Up to 1000 grams of calcium should be consumed daily, preferably from food e.g. milk, yogurt and cheese, to help prevent osteoporosis.
A variety of fruits and vegetables and whole grains should also be eaten.
Avoid fizzy drinks.

Herbal Remedies:

- Black Cohosh (*cimicifuga racemosa*) Probably the best agent to try for hot flushes.
- Dong Quai (*angelica sinensis*) May be helpful in relieving vaginal dryness.
- Oil of Evening Primrose May help breast tenderness.
- Sage (*salvia officinales*) Is a drying herb and can reduce the tendency to sweat. May worsen vaginal dryness.
- St John's Wort (*hypericum*) Can help anxiety and lift depression. To be effective, tablets need to contain 900 micrograms (mcg) of the active ingredient, hypericin.
- Vitex Agnus Castus (Monks' Pepper) Can help mood and regulate hormone levels

Be aware that many herbal or plant extracts, have weak oestrogen-like activity and should be avoided by women undergoing breast cancer treatment.

These plant oestrogens are often referred to as phyto-oestrogens or isoflavones.

Useful Addresses

1. Menopause Matters Ltd www.menopausematters.co.uk
01387 241 121
2. National Osteoporosis Society
Cameron, Bath, BA2 0PS
www.nos.org.uk
Helpline 0845 4500 230
3. Women's Health Concern
10 Storey's Gate
Westminster, London, SW1
Nurse Counselling Service
0845 123 2319
4. The Daisy Network
(Premature Menopause Support Group) www.daisynetwork.org.uk
E-Mail: membership&media@daisynetwork.org.uk