

# Mid-Life Women's Health

By Dr. Sharon Fitelson

Women today face many challenging health issues when entering into their mid-life. From cancer to menopause, diabetes/obesity, and heart disease, it can be overwhelming for some when facing all facets of their changing bodies. Although traditional medicines and methods exist, women today have more options than ever when seeking professional help in dealing with their specific needs.

Briefly think of what each woman must face as hormonal and cellular changes affect their bodies. Breast cancer is the number one fear facing women today, yet heart disease is the number one killer of women. Obesity and Type 2 diabetes are epidemically on the rise in the US. For many osteoporosis is a concern, while others are looking at osteopenia (bone thinning) already diagnosed. Menopause looms in front of all of us, coupled with PMS and perimenopause symptoms, which are so different for all women.

Breast cancer, or any cancer, can be a silent threat. The statistics are overwhelming, now as 1 in 4 of women face this threat, when just 10 years ago it was 1 in 9 women who would be diagnosed with breast cancer. Early detection was the priority in the past, but today the focus has moved on to prevention. We want to prevent oxidative (free-radical) damage to our cell walls and DNA strands. Estrogen receptor sites must be filled with good quality phyto (plant-based) estrogens, and some progesterone is necessary. Eating the proper raw vegetables makes diet a crucial part of prevention. We must balance hormones, as naturally as possible. And of course, exercise and stress reduction should be a part of our daily routine.

Heart disease in women has now caught up with men, with 1 in every 2 women projected to die from heart disease, and a current rate of 1 in every 3. A woman's heart is much different than their male counterparts, in terms of structure, symptoms, and treatment. We are living stressful lives, eating bad food, not exercising and not paying attention to the early warning signs. Unfortunately for some, sudden death is the first and only sign. There is much controversy over Hormone Replacement Therapy for the heart and the correct balance of estrogen and progesterone is crucial. Too much estrogen with not enough absorbable, utilizable progesterone can do more harm than good. No matter what your cardio profile it can always be improved.

Diabetes and obesity are increasing at an alarming rate in our changing society. Our diet is crucial, followed by proper and routine exercise. Thirty three percent of us are obese, while seventy four percent are overweight in the US alone. While this is part of the bodies aging process, it is important to understand that by age 45 our muscles start naturally turning to fat. Then we eat on the run, consume processed foods, and too much fat, go on fad diets and don't exercise. Insulin is a hormone secreted by the pancreas which takes the sugar from food and deposits it as fat. We deplete our pancreas' vitality with too much food at one meal, especially simple carbohydrates, sweets, pastas, white

bread, and rice. The correct balance of complex carbohydrates, fiber and antioxidants can prevent type 2 diabetes and obesity and / or change it radically.

Many women today are also aware of the dangers and crippling effect of osteoporosis. We need to address this long before it starts. By age 30 our bones are starting to thin. Calcium supplementation (not from pills, necessarily, but from proper food), progesterone supplements, exercise and cleaning up the diet are a must. Many women are taking calcium that is not absorbable by the body. It then stays in the blood stream, mixes with fats and creates plaque or is distributed in tendons and soft tissue and forms stones. There are 147 diseases of abnormal calcium metabolism. Strengthening our bones is a must. Learn the proper calcium, life style, diet and hormones to do this. Each woman is so unique that these things need to be addressed specific to the individual.

Fertility can be very complex, and is naturally affected by all our actions. Fertility drugs are too frequently the answer to our problems with conceiving and carrying a child. Diet, once again is crucial, aiding the conception and the ability to successfully come to term. Acupuncture (electric or traditional) is another option used to assist in fertilization. Acupuncture used in conjunction with hormone balance, often in the form of a progesterone crème, is a less conventional, yet effective approach. Many times it is a combination of factors, and not only one that needs to be addressed to be successful before and throughout a pregnancy.

Eventually every woman must come to terms with another big issue, menopause. Menopause has become a disease, when in actuality it can be a quiet and exhilarating transition. Each woman has a different experience from no symptoms, to hot flashes, irritability, mood swings, decreased sexual desire and weight gain, etc. Hormone imbalance is the main culprit and lifestyle is just as important. Often women don't take care of themselves until they are in the middle of this life altering moment. While estrogen is important, the decline in progesterone and therefore, the relative imbalance of the two, is what needs to be addressed, while exercise, eating well, and minimizing stress again cannot be overlooked.

The best strategy is to put together an individual and specific plan of action, outline all possible treatment programs, and find a trustworthy professional team who can provide ongoing coaching. You can have anything from advice to treatment, cross consulting with your M.D., and a holistic physician to help you sort everything out.

Things to consider while exploring treatment options (work to find the best combination); Hormonal assessments, Herbal / homeopathic supplements, Whole food supplementation, Juice Plus, fruits and vegetables in a capsule, Hormone cremes, Acupuncture (electric or traditional), Massage to increase circulation / decrease stress, Chiropractic: release "blockages," Exercise programs: individual or referral to Yoga, Pilates, and cardio / weight trainers, Soy supplementation, Therapists, Martial arts, etc.

Do not be overwhelmed, but rather be thankful that there are now so many options, along with many lifestyle-related remedies. There is much to do, and with the information at

your fingertips, your plan for natural prevention and / or treatment begins with a commitment to stay and be well. This mid-life wellness requires you take action now, and you will be thankful you did.

Dr. Fitelson is a Chiropractic Orthopedist and Diplomate in Acupuncture, practicing holistic medicine for 27 years in St. Louis. A menopausal woman herself, Dr. Fitelson lectures widely on Women's Health. Employing the wisdom of pioneers such as John Lee, M.D., Christiane Northerup, M.D., and Stephen Sinatra, M.D., she advises further education, books, tapes, as well as a multiplicity of approaches to this complex hormonal picture. A moderate on many issues, she blends mainstream with complementary medicine. She believes that education is power and that will propel you to make the best decision for yourself. She makes it easy to understand and offers "next-step" thinking. Her ability to motivate is unquestionable. Call for her lecture series calendar and for an appointment.