



Women's healthcare

MENOPAUSE: CAN I COPE?

Stoppage of monthly menstrual cycle for more than 1 year is known as menopause and it is neither a disorder nor a disease. It is a natural phenomenon. The average age for the natural menopause ranges around 51-53 years. All women experience menopause at some point in their life. Medical conditions such as surgical removal of uterus (known as Hysterectomies) during the reproductive age leads to unnatural or forced menopause in few women. The period preceding menopause is called perimenopause and the period after menopause is known as postmenopausal period.

The period of perimenopause is often challenging; majority of the women do experience more symptoms during perimenopause. This period is long and variable and is a result of slow and fluctuating decline of female reproductive hormones estrogen and progesterone. Symptoms can occur at any time and are of varied frequency and intensity. For several women the early symptoms usually go unnoticed especially when one has busy work schedules. Irregular monthly cycles, mood swings, sleep disturbances and lack of energy all through the day are few of the most common symptoms. Hot flashes and night sweats are present in almost all women.

Declining hormonal levels have direct effect of many physiological parameters. Therefore one tends to gain weight, experience mood swings, depression, anxiety, body and joint pain, vaginal dryness, impaired memory and low libido. This can be detrimental and deteriorate quality of life. It is essential to talk to your doctor for advice. Your doctor will conduct your clinical examination and provide appropriate therapy and

advice lifestyle changes. Understanding and being aware of the signs, symptoms, available treatment options and lifestyle changes one can easily adopt to deal with the situation. Increased blood lipids, loss of calcium from bones and joints leading to weak and fragile bones (known as osteoporosis) is very common and therefore consulting your doctors at the earliest is very important.

Physical activities such as exercise, playing sports, practicing hobbies such as dance are known to improve health. Healthy balanced diet, use of dietary supplements are helpful. Maintaining mindfulness, connecting and communicating with your close circle is an important aspect to draw pleasures in life. Perimenopause, menopause and post menopause are all natural stages in women's life and one need not be unnecessarily worried and scared about it. Flowing through these changes with support system of your doctor and family can ease several issues and one can continue to stay happy and healthy.

In this series, we will continue to talk about other important issues with regards to women's healthcare and how women's health helps develop healthy society.