

The Hormone Survival Guide for Perimenopause: Balance Your Hormones Naturally

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The typical picture of menopause is a woman crying in front of the freezer in the middle of the night. She's hot, tired, cranky, and bloated. The author, a women's health care specialist, thinks she's been having perimenopausal (pre-menopause) symptoms for years. Many women in their later thirties and forties are suffering in silence as they approach menopause. This valuable new ten-chapter book offers them relief.

Perimenopause, as defined by Jackson, describes the symptoms caused by hormonal changes. Menopause is only the last step, when menstruation ceases. Perimenopausal symptoms are often attributed to aging, and can include fibroids, decreased libido, adult acne, abdominal weight gain, worsening PMS, chronic fatigue, depression, irritability, and anxiety. Most women aren't aware that these symptoms are often directly related to changes in estrogen, testosterone, and progesterone levels.

Jackson carefully explains how hormones work in women and charts the symptoms that appear when levels are either too high or too low. She uses anecdotes to show women before and after hormone treatment. She also reiterates the critical importance of recognizing that each woman needs an individualized approach and that women should work with their physicians to ensure correct treatment. The first step is to get a full hormone screen from a doctor. Once hormone levels are identified, Jackson discusses the different ways to take hormones, including the dosages, frequency, side effects, and effectiveness. Thyroid problems, often undiagnosed and untreated in perimenopausal women, get an entire chapter.

The books' subtitle declares a "natural" approach to perimenopause. "This does not refer to the hormones' plant-based origins," Jackson explains, "but to the fact that these hormones function in exactly the same way as your own hormones." Almost all the options she presents require a prescription.

In addition to using hormones to alleviate perimenopausal symptoms, women should take care of their bodies and minds by eating well, sleeping enough, reducing stress, and exercising regularly. Jackson presents basic dietary information in a very friendly and inspiring manner, offering dietary solutions for PMS and stress.

Suggestions for dealing with specific symptoms such as hair loss, migraines, bladder control, breast tenderness, vaginal dryness, PMS, and, of course, hot flashes and night sweats, are covered individually.

Since most of these symptoms are chronic rather than acute, the medical community has taken little notice. As more perimenopausal women demand relief, more doctors will learn to recognize and treat the full range of symptoms. Sooner or later, every woman needs what Jackson offers: solid facts and clear solutions, in language and tone that encourage women to get help and change their lives.

ANNA STEWART (May / June 2004)

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