



## Menopause Transition

Monica Smith, DO

**A**round the age of 40, women's bodies begin perimenopause, the transition leading to menopause. Menopause is defined as one year without menses, with the average woman's age being 51. During this transition, ovaries progressively fail to produce estrogen. In up to eighty-five percent of women, this deficiency can lead to:

- insomnia
- vaginal dryness
- vaginal discomfort
- loss of libido
- lack of concentration
- itchy skin
- osteoporosis
- anxiety
- hot flashes
- sweating

Today, there are over 70 million women over the age of fifty, many of whom are dealing with varying degrees of menopause transition, often referred to as "the change." For many women, moderate to severe hot flashes can last up to 15 years after reaching menopausal age. Emotionally, some women experience exhilaration and relief, since they no longer have to worry about having periods or using birth control. For others, it can be a time of anxiety, sadness and irritability.

So how best to address the many symptoms associated with menopause transition? Menopausal hormone therapy (MHT) is the most effective intervention for the management of symptoms associated with menopause transition. MHT is either estrogen or a combination estrogen/progesterone treatment in the form of pill, patch or gel. The goal of the therapy is to alleviate the symptoms in menopausal and perimenopausal women, particularly hot flashes.

Not all women need menopausal hormone therapy to alleviate their symptoms. There are other treatment options available. Many women fear the health risks associated with MHT, however doctors recommend a short-term treatment, which is rarely associated to health risks. In fact, research shows that the benefits go beyond just menopause transition. MHT is shown to have positive effects on brain, skeleton, skin, urogenital and cardiovascular systems.

If you're going through the menopause process, know that you are not alone. When trying to determine how best to proceed through menopause transition, it is best to consult your OB/GYN. Every woman's body is different, so it is important to be evaluated to determine the right treatment based on the symptoms and severity.

Remember, most menopausal symptoms resolve themselves after five years, so there is light at the end of the tunnel. Menopausal hormone therapy is one option that can help to provide relief and improve your quality of life.

**-Monica Smith, DO**



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Dr. Monica Smith practices at Washington Health Systems OB/GYN Care. The practice has locations in Washington, McMurray, Waynesburg, and California.

Dr. Smith received her degree from West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine. She completed her residency at Charleston Area Medical Center Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. She is board certified by the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

To schedule an appointment, please call **(724) 225-3640**, or visit [whsdoc.org](http://whsdoc.org).

