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Strategies to Improve the Care of MS in Women

Menopause

OVERVIEW

Menopause is a process of reproductive change that typically occurs between 45 and 55 years of age. Because the onset of MS typically occurs during the childbearing years, many women living with MS experience this transition. Symptoms of menopause may include irregular menstrual periods, hot flashes, weight gain, urinary incontinence or urgency, sleep disturbance, night sweats, and others. Some women find symptoms are reduced by avoiding caffeine, alcohol, and tobacco.

RELEVANCE FOR MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Menopause may affect your MS, but there is little data on how the hormonal changes impact the disease or its management. Some studies have shown increased fatigue and an increase in other pre-existing MS symptoms. Additionally, there is frequent overlap between menopausal and MS-related symptoms and co-morbidities such as sexual dysfunction, mood disorders, and bladder dysfunction. These are issues that have significant impact on quality of life.

Your health care provider can help you distinguish between symptoms of menopause and MS and will help manage your medications to optimize your disease control. MS symptoms can fluctuate during menopause, so both attention to symptoms and adherence to medications are very important. This is NOT a time to stop taking care of your MS. Of special note, tobacco use may be especially harmful for menopausal women with MS.

ABOUT YOU

Which statements describe you? (*check all that apply*)

I am experiencing more fatigue recently

I have had hot flashes recently

My menstrual periods are irregular

I am noticing my old MS symptoms more recently

Which ones? _____

I am experiencing new MS symptoms

Which ones? _____

I don't sleep well

Intercourse is painful

I have reduced my MS medication

I am more forgetful

I am always worrying about needing a restroom when I go out, so sometimes I just don't go out



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RESOURCES

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