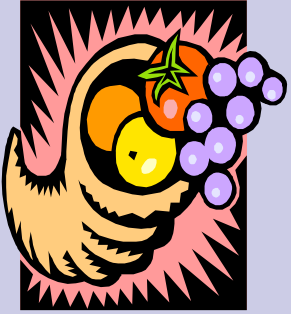


Ways to Help You Stay Healthy



Eat Right

By eating a calcium rich diet, you can prevent or slow down the development of osteoporosis. Dairy products, beans, broccoli, and calcium enriched foods are recommended sources of calcium.

Protect Your Heart

It is crucial that you eat healthy, low fat, low cholesterol, and low sugar foods. This will help decrease your risk of getting a heart attack and other heart related diseases. It will also help you control your weight.

Avoid Smoking

Smoking has been found to be a risk factor in heart disease, lung cancer, and osteoporosis, not to mention several other diseases. It is never too late to quit smoking.

Exercise Regularly

Physical activity decreases the risk of heart disease and can counter the process of bone loss. Not only will exercise promote your physical health, but it will also improve your mental well-being by serving as a form of stress relief and mood enhancement. You will be amazed at the amount of energy you will have for your daily activities after having exercised in the morning. Be sure to consult your doctor before beginning an exercise program.

Menopause



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Understanding Menopause

For many, menopause can be a disturbing time in a woman's life. It may be difficult for her to understand and cope with the changes that occur in her body, especially when she feels signs of declining health. However, menopause is a normal stage in a woman's life and may be seen as a mercy from Allah, as He gives the body a break from the difficulty of bearing and raising children. Allah says in the Quran, "And he whom We grant long life, We reverse him in creation (weakness after strength). Will they not then understand?" (Quran 36:68)

While the loss of fertility appears to be the most dramatic change accompanying menopause, there are several other changes, which you may experience. This brochure discusses some of the common symptoms of menopause as well as some measures you can take in order to maintain good health upon reaching this stage of your life.

A Time of Change

Menopause is not a disease but rather a natural phase of a woman's biological cycle. It is the permanent cessation (stopping) of menstrual periods, which occurs as a result of a decline in the function of the ovaries. This may occur as early as the age of 40 or as late as 55.

The period of transition prior to menopause is known as peri-menopause, which is characterized by irregular periods, mood changes, diminished sex drive, and worsening of premenstrual symptoms. This phase can last several years before the onset of actual menopause.

Changes Due to Menopause

Because the hormone levels of estrogen and progesterone decrease in the woman's body during menopause, several biological changes occur. Here is a list of common symptoms.

Hot Flashes Women may experience hot flashes, a sensation of warmth that spreads over the body. It is often associated with perspiration. Hot flashes may vary in intensity, lasting a few seconds to minutes and can recur as frequently as every ten to thirty minutes. Some women experience hot flashes more severely at night, as in night sweats, which can be very disruptive to a normal sleeping pattern.

Urinary System The decrease in hormone levels also affects the urinary system by causing increased irritability of the bladder, which can lead to involuntary loss of urine as well as an increased susceptibility to infection. Women may experience the need to urinate more often and with more urgency in addition to pain during urination.

Vaginal dryness and pain Due to a change in the shape of the vaginal walls as well as a decreased production of natural lubricant, women may feel dryness in the vagina in addition to pain during sexual intercourse.

Cardiovascular Disease Before menopause, high estrogen levels in the body protect a woman from developing heart disease. Once these hormone levels drop due to menopause, her chance of developing heart disease increases greatly if she does not practice healthy living habits.

Bone loss and osteoporosis High estrogen levels help maintain bone thickness and health. However, as hormone levels decrease, women are more susceptible to losing bone mass and possibly developing osteoporosis. Osteoporosis is a painful disease in which the calcium found in bones decreases, causing bones to become weak and easily broken.

Emotional changes Women may experience a decrease in self esteem, anxiety about aging, and remorse regarding the loss of fertility (or the ability to bear children). Feelings of depression may increase in women who are already depressed.

Treatment Options

Medical treatment of peri-menopausal women is based on the severity of symptoms. Many women choose not to have any medical treatment and simply make lifestyle changes such as decreasing caffeine consumption, quitting smoking, increasing exercise, and eating a balanced diet, in order to stay healthy.

Hormone therapy has been the subject of much controversy, and many of the recent therapies have been taken off the market due to suspected side effects. If you are currently taking hormone treatment or if you choose to receive medical treatment, consult with your doctor.

Alternative medical therapies are becoming increasingly popular for the treatment of the symptoms of menopause. Herbal preparations such as black cohosh, kava kava, soy products, phytoestrogens, and others have been shown in some studies to reduce the symptoms of menopause. However, before taking any herbal treatments be sure to consult with your doctor.

