



### Tai-Nan Wang L.Ac., O.M.D.

4295 Gesner Street, Suite 1A  
San Diego, CA 92117  
619-684-1848

## Easing Your Transition through Menopause

As women enter the autumn of their reproductive years, major physiological changes occur that may give rise to symptoms of menopause. Like a plant going through many changes with the cycle of the seasons, it is natural for a woman in her middle years to cease menstruating on a regular cycle and to experience mild to extremely uncomfortable symptoms as a result.



The winter season of life, or menopause, is a time to take shelter and preserve energy. This is a quieter, calmer phase of life in which a healthy woman may need extra support to feel comfortable in her body as it changes. Age should bring wisdom, not excess heat and dryness that cause unnecessary discomfort. As women move from autumn to the winter phase of their natural feminine cycle, it is reassuring to know that acupuncture and Oriental medicine can be integrated into your health plan to support this transition.

Some of the most common symptoms of menopause include hot flashes, night sweats, dizziness, insomnia, irritability, mood swings, osteoporosis, and dryness. Acupuncture and Oriental medicine provide treatments and lifestyle suggestions which may reduce the severity of these symptoms. The organ system most involved in producing these symptoms of menopause is the kidney, specifically the decline of kidney yin. Kidney yin is like a cool, refreshing reservoir of water and when it dries up, heat and dryness more readily ensue.

In general, yin represents the nourishing, cooling energies. When it reduces, metaphorically speaking, there exists in the body less water to put out the fire. Yang energy represents the moving, active principle which is like the rays of sunshine providing the sustenance needed for plants to thrive. However, when in excess, heat destroys plants and leaves them brown, dried and withered. Based on this premise, it makes sense that menopausal women can present with excess heat signs such as hot flashes and irritability.

According to the Huang di Nei Jing, the body dynamics of women significantly change every seven years. At 35 years of age, the blood and energy (Qi) of the Large Intestine and Stomach Channels start their decline. Here we see fine lines on the face and neck, thinning hair and a drier quality to the skin. For a woman of 42, these same channels weaken further as evidenced by deepening wrinkles, hair color changing to gray or white, and the continual loss of skin moisture and elasticity. At 49, a woman's Conception Vessel and the related meridians exhaust themselves, giving rise to symptoms of menopause.

The changes in these meridians lead to the cessation of menstruation and loss of fertility. The Conception Vessel or Ren Channel is called the "sea of yin" and is closely associated with pregnancy, fetal development and reproductive health in general. The Chong Mai or Chong Meridian is known as the "sea of blood" and heavily influences blood flow in the uterus and the menstrual cycle.

In July of 2014, the North American Menopause Society (NAMS) conducted a large-scale analysis of previous scientific studies examining the role of acupuncture in reducing various symptoms of menopause. Out of the 12 studies analyzed, researchers concluded that acupuncture positively impacted both the frequency and severity of hot flashes. NAMS executive director Margery Gass, M.D. stated, "The review suggested acupuncture may be an alternative therapy for reducing hot flashes, particularly for those women

seeking non-pharmacologic therapies." While hot flashes may not pose a health risk in and of themselves, the severity of them may affect quality of life and cause great physical and emotional stress.

While acupuncture and Oriental medicine and Western Medicine offer different treatments for menopause, both traditions agree on certain suggestions for lifestyle choices and diet. Avoiding spicy foods, hot beverages, caffeine, alcohol and cigarettes may help prevent the onset of hot flashes, night sweats and other symptoms. All of these foods and substances irritate the body. Additionally, acupuncture and Oriental medicine considers cigarettes to be particularly detrimental for menopausal women because when smoke enters the body it dries up the yin and the fluids, which need to be preserved during menopause.

**Call today to see how acupuncture and Oriental medicine can ease your transition through changes in your life!**

## Male Menopause? Alleviating the Symptoms of Andropause

In an effort to better describe the diagnosis and treatment of male-specific health issues that arise during mid-life, a new term has been coined in the medical community--andropause. Though it is often referred to as "male menopause," andropause is more than the male equivalent of menopause, as it presents its own unique set of symptoms, causes and patterns of onset.



Andropause refers to the process a man undergoes when the body produces fewer androgens (male hormones). The hormone most strongly affected is testosterone, as it is the most dominant of all the male hormones we know of. Testosterone not only plays a vital role in male development, it greatly affects the overall health of a man's body and mind.

Testosterone directly influences many bodily functions and organs, including the heart, prostate, muscles, blood sugar, fat metabolism, bone density, libido, and mental cognition. Sudden mood changes, depression and anger also may result from andropause. The decline of testosterone production gradually starts in the early thirties and continues through the mid-fifties.

In contrast to menopause, which happens over a much shorter period of time, the signs of andropause creep up gradually, making an accurate diagnosis tricky. Signs and symptoms of andropause can include loss of libido, enlarged prostate, weight gain, osteoporosis, sterility, urinary problems and infections, and digestive problems.

According to Culley C. Carson, M.D., Boston University, School of Medicine, it is estimated that more than 60 percent of men over age 65 have free testosterone levels below the normal values of men in the 30 to 35 age range. While the incremental loss of testosterone represents the natural life cycle in an aging, healthy male, more severe levels of decrease can prove detrimental.

According to classical texts, the physical and emotional effects of aging in general occur largely due to, but not limited to, the decline of the Mingmen Fire. Also known as the Ministerial Fire, it resides near the spine, between the two kidneys and at the level of the umbilicus. This life-giving force is the fuel from which all the organs of the body draw from. For instance, the Mingmen Fire provides the warmth and energy needed to stimulate the large intestine. Once in motion, it can perform its job of excreting waste from the body.

One reason why a man may experience the loss of libido or infertility in his middle or later years is due to the waning of the Mingmen Fire. If this is the case and the fire is out, other signs such as frequent urination, sore lower back or knees and/or lethargy may also be present.

For men, the onset of andropause may be gradual and, as such, the symptoms hard to diagnose. The natural decline of the Mingmen Fire or Ministerial Fire may also compound or worsen symptoms of andropause. When the Ministerial Fire is out, the body becomes cold and old age sets in. However, long before that, many of the mild to more severe conditions may respond very well to different acupuncture and Oriental medicine therapies.

**Call today to learn more about andropause and learn what acupuncture and Oriental medicine can do for you!**

## Ease Your Mid-Life Transition

Good nutrition remains a cornerstone of good health, no matter what stage of life we are in. During major life transitions such as menopause and andropause, your dietary needs tend to change.

Eating well is an art that should bring you as much pleasure as nourishment. Yet somehow this art can become complicated rather quickly. You can integrate nutritional recommendations from acupuncture and Oriental medicine into your diet to ease you through the changes your body goes through during mid-life.



One of the first things to consider is the time of your meal. According to the acupuncture and Oriental medicine circadian clock theory, the most appropriate time to eat breakfast is between 7 a.m. and 9 a.m. This is the time of the Stomach, when the energy in this organ is at its fullest, making it ready to receive food. Consider breakfast as the nutritional foundation for your day.

Every two hours, a different organ is poised for peak performance. Eating at the hour of the Stomach provides your body with the optimal energy needed to start the digestive process. The next 2-hour block of time, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., is the hour of the Spleen. The Spleen initiates the next phase of digestion, which further reinforces eating breakfast earlier.

Calcium is one of the most important nutrients for maintaining healthy bones and teeth. During menopause and andropause, the risk of developing osteoporosis increases. The best way to ensure your body has enough calcium is through foods rich in this nutrient. Vitamin D also aids in calcium absorption. One of the best ways to support the production of vitamin D is through adequate sunlight exposure. Try to get at least 15 minutes of sun each day. Foods high in calcium include fish with bones (such as sardines), broccoli, beans, lentils, almonds, milk, yogurt, and walnuts. Both men and women should feature foods in their diets to support the skeletal system, kidney health, and brain function during the middle years.

Regardless of your gender, or how old you are, make an effort to seek out new foods and styles of cooking. Eating a varied diet is the best way to ensure you receive all of the many nutrients your body needs. The next time you make a salad, for instance, pick one vegetable for each color of the rainbow. You can apply this concept to your meals by enjoying dishes with different colored vegetables or by using new spices. Eating is an everyday activity and one way to keep your life exciting through all phases of life is through eating interesting food.

