

For advice about menopause, pap tests or mammograms, ask your GP, women's health centre or Family Planning Association Clinic or hospital menopause clinic.

You can also contact Mid-Link, a health service for women in their middle years at Westmead. Mid-Link can also come to you if you're in the Parramatta, Auburn, Holroyd, Blacktown/Mount Druitt and Baulkham Hills areas. If you have a group of friends or work colleagues who'd like information on any aspect of women's health in mid-life, Mid-Link can come to your workplace or community centre. Women having emotional problems at mid-life can also talk to someone at Mid-Link.

For more information, ring (02) 9845 6452.

This confidential service is free to women aged 35 to 65. Interpreters can be arranged if necessary.

Telephone numbers are correct at time of publication but are not continually updated. You may need to check the numbers in the telephone directory.

NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service
Website: <http://www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au>
Email: mhcs@sesiahs.health.nsw.gov.au
Tel: (02) 9816 0347



English
[BHC-3125]

PREPARING FOR A HEALTHY MENOPAUSE



PREPARING FOR A HEALTHY MENOPAUSE

Forty-five year old Anna is a health conscious woman. After a brisk 30 minute walk each evening she makes dinner for her family—usually a traditional meal of rice, vegetables and fish or poultry, followed by fruit.

“Every day I try to do some kind of exercise—usually a long walk,” says Anna, who works as a nurse. “I enjoy doing it, but I also do it for a good reason—I know that being active and eating healthy food can help women have fewer problems at the change of life (menopause).”

Anna has the right idea. Although most women don’t experience the change of life until they are around the age of 50, many doctors believe that healthy habits in the 30s and 40s can reduce the problems some women have at mid-life.

Menopause, of course, is that time when a woman’s periods stop, usually between the age of 44 and 55 (sometimes earlier or later). Her periods stop because two small organs called ovaries produce fewer hormones than before. For most women, this change will cause either no symptoms at all, or only mild symptoms lasting a few months. But for some women, symptoms such as hot flashes, a dry, sore vagina, bladder problems (going to the toilet more often, or leaking urine when coughing or sneezing), mood swings and loss of sex drive can be distressing. These symptoms can be treated.

“I don’t think the change of life is anything to fear,” says Anna. “These days women have a long life span and can look forward to

many productive years even though they can no longer have children. Besides, some of the changes are for the better—no more period pain and no more worries about pregnancy.”

So what can women do in their 30s and 40s to prepare for menopause? Follow Anna’s example and exercise regularly. Besides helping your whole body work better, exercise helps prevent the bone thinning disease called osteoporosis which is more common after menopause. The best exercises for strengthening bones are those such as walking, dancing, tai chi, exercise classes or sports such as tennis or golf. Although swimming or cycling are excellent ways to keep fit, they don’t help strengthen bones as well as some other forms of exercise.

Including calcium rich foods in your diet can also strengthen bones. These foods include low fat dairy foods such as cheese, yoghurt and milk; canned fish with edible bones such as salmon or sardines, broccoli and other green leafy vegetables (especially Asian green leafy vegetables) soy milk with added calcium, tofu, fish sauce, tahini and almonds.

The right food is important for many reasons. Although heart disease is usually a problem associated with men, a woman’s risk of this disease increases after menopause. Regular exercise, avoiding fatty food, and not smoking can lower her risk. Some doctors also suggest that eating plenty of vegetables and soy products such as soymilk and tofu can help prevent problems at menopause.

Don’t forget that health checks such as regular Pap tests for women up to the age of 70, and regular breast X-rays (mammograms) for women over the age of 50 are important.