

# Menopause: It can be normal or severe

Dear Joe

Could you please address the subject to menopause in your column? When does it need treatment? What treatment are available? Thank you, Mrs. G. 40 Plus Reader

Dear Mrs. G./ Most women going through menopause do not require any treatment at all. It is, for them, just another part of the natural development in the female life cycle.

Treatment is needed only for severe symptoms of menopause. These included hot flashes, episodes of sweating followed by breathlessness and chills, and vaginal changes. Many doctors prescribe estrogen replacement therapy (ERT) as a major treatment. ERT, using a synthetic estrogen, supplements the decreasing amounts of estrogen produced by the body. Estrogen in pill form is most often prescribed for the prevention of osteoporosis. It is ap-

plied in cream form for several vaginal symptoms.

Estrogen therapy can be highly effective but it must be used with caution. The reasons for this are many.

- About 10 percent of women who use estrogen experience side effects such as nausea, headaches, vaginal discharge, fluid retention, swollen breasts, and weight gain.

- Some early studies suggested that breast cancer and heart disease were associated with estrogen use. Current evidence refutes this evidence — yet the controversy continues.

- Cancer of the endometrium (lining of the uterus) has been found to occur more frequently in women who use ERT containing estrogen as the only ingredient, compared with untreated women. Present treatment usually combines estrogen with progestin (another hormone) and this combination appears to reduce the risk of endometrial cancer. But even with this improved form of estrogen therapy, experts do not yet know if its long-term use is completely safe.

- Women who are poor candidates for ERT are those who have had (or now have) heart disease,

gerontology  
**A. Jolayne Farrell**

breast or endometrial cancer, stroke, migraine headaches, high blood pressure, blood clots or other circulatory disorder.

- Other conditions that warrant extreme caution in the use of ERT are obesity, a family history of cancer, vaginal bleeding, liver or

gallbladder disease and diabetes. Women who are at high risk of developing osteoporosis or have severe symptoms accompanying menopause should discuss the use of ERT with their doctors. Readers can write to Jolayne Farrell at 11 Cynthia Crescent, Richmond Hill, Ontario L4B 2P8.

## EMEAC meeting Tuesday


The East Michigan Environmental Action Council will host a meeting on "One Environment, Building a Cooperative Approach" 8:30-9:30 p.m. Tuesday.

Keynote speaker will be David Hales, director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. He will also respond to questions from the audience and a panel representing environmental groups, business-

es and local government. EMEAC is a non-profit, public interest organization established in 1970 to improve the environmental quality in southeast Michigan. Admission price is \$10 for individuals and \$15 for couples. Wine and hors d'oeuvres will be provided at a reception at 8:30 p.m. For more details or to register, call EMEAC at 258-5188.

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