

Menopause Update - April 2009

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Comments pulled from various articles I have recently read:

Experts Ponder Association Between Oophorectomy (removal of ovaries) and Dementia

Women who have their ovaries removed before age 50 and do not receive add back estrogen are more likely to develop dementia, parkinsonism, and have a greater risk for depression or anxiety symptoms. Estrogen has a host of beneficial effects on the brain including oxidative stress and increasing cerebral blood flow.

From an article by Pauline Anderson quoting Walter A Rocca, MD, professor of epidemiology and neurology at the Mayo Clinic College of Medicine, in Rochester Minnesota.

Increased physical activity at mid life leads to improved self worth and positive mood.

There are variations in menstrual cycle length prior to periods ceasing. Hot flashes and night sweats may occur first. There are 4 to 8 years of changes before periods cease. Hot flashes and night sweats are associated with decreased bone density. (from decreasing estrogen levels)

Estrogen and progesterone are associated with an overall reduction in colorectal cancer risk.

And again, there is a critical window of time for starting hormone therapy. The consensus is growing that the risks and benefits are different for younger and older women, and that for women who start hormones around the time of menopause, the benefits may outweigh the risks. For instance, there was an 11% lower risk of heart problems in women starting hormones closer to menopause. (70% higher risk of heart attacks when started 20 years past menopause) One theory is that estrogen helps keep healthy blood vessels supple, but makes atherosclerosis worse once it has set in.

Similarly, hormone therapy seems to help preserve thinking ability when started around menopause, but may hasten the progression of pre-existing memory problems when started later in life. JoAnn E. Manson. M.D. Harvard Medical School Advisor.