

# NANCY CARLSON FISHER, MD

## *Individualized Women's Healthcare*

1775 Williston Road, Suite 220, S. Burlington, VT 05403 (P) 802.861.0200

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### **Painful Intercourse After Menopause**

For many post menopausal women the main complaint is painful intercourse related to vaginal dryness. When a woman's body stops producing estradiol, the vaginal epithelium becomes thin and less elastic. This can cause pain with intercourse. Lubrication also is reduced. These symptoms can be helped with a vaginal hormone replacement (VHR).

Unlike systemic therapy, VHR uses low doses of estrogen which act directly on the vaginal lining. I believe treatment of vaginal dryness early in menopause is important for preventing painful intercourse and maintaining a healthy sexual relationship with one's partner.

In the past creams were the only option for VHR and frequently not used consistently because they are messy. Now, there are other options which are well-received by woman and result in consistent use which is important for positive results.

One popular option is a tablet that is pre-loaded in an applicator which is placed in the vagina twice weekly after an initial loading dose of one each day for two weeks. The ideal time of insertion is at bed time. The tablet is absorbed and the resultant discharge is minimal. Improvement in vaginal atrophy (issued tissue thickness and lubrication) takes about two to three months so it is important to not skip any doses to achieve the best results.

Another option is the vaginal ring which is inserted and left in place for three months at a time. This is obviously very convenient and provides a steady, continued release of estrogen. Some women find the ring slightly uncomfortable, but I feel it is worth a try secondary to the convenience which results in predictable improvement of vaginal atrophy.

### **GYN UPDATE GOOD NEWS!**

### **Hormone Replacement Therapy**

The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) has issued an updated statement on hormone therapy (HT) which states that HT used to treat menopause-related symptoms is associated with a favorable benefit-risk ratio when started at the time of menopause. New data suggests that HT initiated at the time of menopause is associated with a cardiovascular benefit. NAMS has made it clear, though, that HT should not be used solely to prevent heart disease. The lowest dose for the shortest period of time continues to be the general recommendation.

**Of course, the decision to use any form of hormones is one that should be discussed with your physician.**

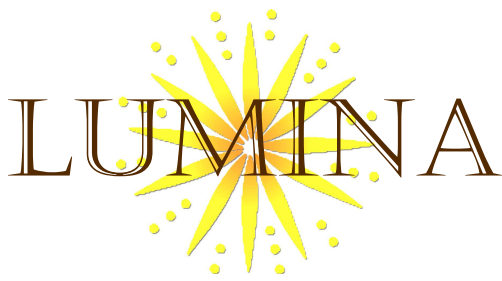
### **Chinese Medicine and Menopause**

Contributed By: Holly Thompson, L. Ac.

It is very important to realize that menopause is not a disease, but rather a natural physiological change. According to Chinese medical theory, as a natural part of the aging process, a woman's body no longer produces sufficient blood to sustain a monthly period without the loss being a drain on her body. In this case, blood might be viewed as a metaphor for estrogen/progesterone. In Chinese medicine, the functions ascribed to blood are more numerous and varied than in Western biomedicine. As the periods cease, blood and essence that were once lost with the period are said to nourish the woman's heart and spirit. That is why Chinese medicine views menopause as a true change in life in which a woman ceases to be a biological mother and becomes a mother in the community. In many traditional cultures, including China, post-menopausal women are regarded as wise women since their spirits are now nourished and enlighten in a way that they were not before.

Unfortunately, the transition into menopause is not always a smooth one. Many women experience hot flashes, night sweats, depression, anxiety, fatigue, palpitations, insomnia, vaginal dryness and atrophy, or uterine spotting and flooding. Chinese medicine, acupuncture, and/or herbal medicine, is often very effective in alleviating these menopausal symptoms. Studies reported in the *Shandong Journal of Traditional Medicine* (1992) and *Sichuan Traditional Chinese Medicine* (1993) discussed the successful use of Chinese herbal treatment in resolving menopausal complaints. In one study, 28 out of 30 women reported complete relief or marked improvement in their symptoms. Kim et al. in *Menopause* (March 2010), performed a randomized controlled trial of 175 women and concluded that use of acupuncture resulted in marked clinical improvement of hot flashes and other menopausal symptoms.

In addition to acupuncture and herbs, lifestyle, exercise, and diet can affect menopausal symptoms. When you see me for menopausal issues, I will review your health history and current symptoms to determine what course of treatment will most likely be effective for you. In most cases, a combination of acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine tailored to your body's symptoms and patterns will help to provide relief from symptoms and a smoother transition into menopause.



## INTRODUCING PEARL

Renew your skin's surface and minimize wrinkles, uneven texture and discoloration with **Pearl**.

### Usefulness of Topical Antioxidants

Exposure to UV Radiation (sunlight) produces free radicals in our skin and bodies. Radicals are known to cause sun damage and skin cancer. There are many types of radicals, but the reactive oxygen variety (ROS) is particularly damaging to the skin. Radicals are necessary to maintain a normal balance at the cell level; over production of them, however, leads to stress. UV Radiation is one of the most common factors in the over production of ROS.

There are three types of UV Radiation: A, B, and C. UVB rays are thought to be the most damaging to the skin. Not only do they increase free radicals but they also decrease our natural antioxidant levels which keep free radicals from damaging cells.

The application of topical antioxidants helps reduce the damaging effects of the free radicals.

**Phenolic Antioxidants**, derived from plants are one of many types of antioxidants that are known to "scavenge" or reduce the amount of free radicals produced by UV Radiation.

**Green Tea** - derived from the Camellia Sinensis plant, is a good source of multiple polyphenol antioxidants. The most potent, EGCG, has been shown in studies to protect cells against many UV induced changes.

**Resveratrol** - a strong polyphenol found in grapes, berries, peanuts and cocoa. Topical application of resveratrol clearly reduces the amount of free radicals and prevents other cell changes that may lead to skin cancer.

**Ferolic Acid** - This antioxidant is found naturally in rice, bran and tomatoes. It prevents free radical production and also can absorb UV Radiation but it is not considered a sunscreen.

**Genistein** - Genistein is an isoflavone found in soy beans. It increases the activity of antioxidants found in the skin plus it prevents free radical formation and reduces the effect free radicals have on cells. Genistein also has been shown to reduce erythema, carcinomas and photoaging secondary to UV exposure.

**Ergothioneine** - A less well-known antioxidant found in many plants. It reduces formation of radicals and increase the effect of other antioxidants, such as Vitamin C.

**Coffee Arabica** - Commonly called CoffeeBerry, this antioxidant scavenges or reduces the presence of free radicals by increasing the activity of certain enzymes that occur naturally in the skin.

**Theobroma Cacao** - Cocoa seed extract contains two antioxidants that are potent scavengers of free radicals. It is also a natural source of resveratrol.

**Caffeine** - Caffeine is a natural compound found in many plant sources. It seems to augment the action of other antioxidants like green tea. Caffeine reduces many types of free radicals produced by the sun and research shows that topical application of caffeine can reduce skin cancers caused by UV Radiation.

Many of the products at LUMINA contain the topical antioxidants listed above.

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Stop by our office at 1775 Williston Road, South Burlington, VT or on the web at [www.nancyfishermd.com](http://www.nancyfishermd.com).

The Pearl procedure combines the impact of resurfacing lasers with the gentleness and safety of non-invasive procedures to treat aging and sun-damaged skin. Pearl reduces wrinkles, uneven texture and solar damage with fewer treatments and less overall recovery than other technologies to provide a health, pearl-like glow. The Pearl is an FDA approved treatment of wrinkles and skin resurfacing, which treats the top layer of skin with pulses of light in a pre-selected pattern. The laser simultaneously sends heat to the deeper layers of skin to provide longer-term benefits. A natural protective dressing forms on the skin to minimize downtime during the restorative process, this natural dressing will peel off revealing new, healthy, vibrant skin. Pearl offers the most effective treatment to address fine lines, uneven texture and discoloration without wound care and then lengthy downtime required with certain Erbium and CO2 laser procedures. Compared to today's fractionated technologies, Pearl offers noticeable results in just one treatment versus 4-6 fractionated treatments.

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PEARL RESULTS



Before 3.0 J med pulse, 2 treatments After Photo Courtesy Dr. Barry DiBernardo



Before After Photo Courtesy Dr. Leonardo Rasi

Changing the Way a Woman Sees Her Doctor