

Q & A



DR. FIONA WRIGHT

Join the forum today by emailing our Dr. Wright at drwright@onmagazine.net and express your personal fitness or beauty question. She may answer your question or she may ask a colleague for their expert opinion. Then, read ON Magazine's next issue to discover the *wright* answer to your fitness or beauty question.

If you have questions, we have the *wright* answers. What do you want to know?

In this issue, Dr. Wright has focused on two very common questions and has answered them in great detail to provide you with the information that you are looking for. In answering these questions, Dr. Wright is excited to introduce our readers to her new landmark center, Skin M.D. & Beyond Wellness Center. With her Certified Nutrition Team, you can learn how to use food as an ally in your optimal health program! From supermarket to the kitchen or restaurant, we will show you how to eat healthy and still enjoy!

I am beginning to go through menopause. What are some good diet tips to help with hot flashes, signs of aging, and weight gain??

Pamela L., Flower Mound TX

Menopause is the natural part of a woman's life cycle when the menstrual period stops. It is sometimes called "the change of life" and is a unique and personal experience for every woman. The perimenopausal years (those leading up to that final period) may be as long as ten years and are different for each woman. In this stage, estrogen levels begin to decline, ovulation becomes less regular, and weight gain tends to become a problem. Some women who have struggled with just a few extra pounds often find themselves struggling harder against weight gain during perimenopause. Even women who have generally stayed in a healthy weight range for many years suddenly find themselves having to work a lot harder to stay there. Some experts believe that the reason for the weight issue is the fluctuation in hormone levels, while others suggest it is an age-related decline in muscle mass that ultimately decreases metabolism. **As with weight loss at any stage of life, dieting isn't the only answer. The key is lifestyle change and exercise combined.** Experts feel that if you have not been exercising throughout life, perimenopause is the time when you should really begin. At this point, you need to develop more muscle mass through exercise to achieve a higher fat-burning metabolic rate that can help you lose extra pounds and stay at a healthy weight.

As well, an important aim at this time is to introduce as many foods as possible which contain plant estrogens (phytoestrogens). These weak estrogenic compounds help to balance hormones, increasing the body's own levels when they are low and decreasing levels when they are too high. Japanese women generally experience far fewer symptoms of menopause than Western women, and this is thought to be because they consume more estrogenic foods such as soybeans, tofu, miso, flaxseed, fruits, and vegetables. As a general guideline, 4 oz tofu, 8 oz soy milk, or a handful of soybeans per day provide optimum amounts of phytoestrogens. As a supplement, taking 40-80mg of phytoestrogens daily is the recommended dose.

Hot flashes will vary from person to person, but with a good diet and nutritional supplements, most of this unpleasant side effect can be minimized if not eliminated. Many women have tried various diet remedies to help, but the results have been inconsistent. Some, however, do work! **For hot flashes, avoid the following which can make them worse: tea, coffee, alcohol, caffeinated soft drinks, spicy foods, and smoking.** Some supplements that have been helpful are Black Cohosh for a short-term use up to six months, Vitamin E, Dong Quai, Wild Yam, and Evening Primrose Oil.

In your eating patterns, you may have

survived for years on irregular meal times and convenience snacks, but these now have to be a thing of the past. **You may find that you feel better if you eat little and often to avoid dropping blood-sugar levels which will often increase menopausal symptoms.** Foods should be as unprocessed as possible. Remember that the more highly processed or refined a food, the fewer nutrients it contains. This is a high-nutrient time of your life and you cannot afford to eat low-nutrient foods.

Many remedies can be tried to help through this transition time, but it is important to work with your doctor before changing your diet drastically or using herbal supplements. Some herbs can interfere with or intensify the action of blood thinners and others drugs, so patients should always ask a health practitioner before taking any herbal products. The bottom line for women's nutritional requirements? -Eating a variety of foods, supplemented by a multivitamin, is the best way to get the nutrients we need.

