

HORMONE HARMONY WITH GRAPE SEED EXTRACT

BY KAREN JENSEN

Every year millions of women enter the normal transition to menopause.

This major hormone shift, which commonly begins 3–6 years before a woman's last period, is called perimenopause. It signals the end of a woman's reproductive years.



During this time, hormones are fluctuating as wildly as they did in puberty, bringing bothersome and sometimes debilitating symptoms, such as menstrual irregularities, hot flashes/night sweats, insomnia, libido problems, vaginal dryness, accelerated skin aging, heavy painful periods, and difficult mood changes. For many, it's not much fun. But hey, you survived puberty, and you can survive perimenopause, too! Half the battle is understanding that this is a normal stage of life and using your newfound knowledge as well as making a trip to a local health food store can make the passage a lot smoother.

IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO START SUPPORTING THE ADRENAL GLANDS.

The first thing to know is that perimenopause is a little less bumpy for the women whose adrenal glands are healthy and functioning well. The adrenal glands are the main stress-adaptive organs in the body, and they also play an important role during the transition to menopause. The adrenals become the main source of hormone production (estrogens and androgens) as the ovaries start their well-deserved vacation during the perimenopause years. It helps keep the adrenals well supported even before menopause, and the stronger the adrenals, the easier time you will have during perimenopause.

HERBAL ADRENAL SUPPORT?

WomenSense® AdrenaSense® from Assured Natural is a natural adrenal support supplement containing herbs that help the body adapt to the negative effects of ongoing stress. I have recommended AdrenaSense to my patients for many years to support their hormonal health before, during, and after menopause.

AMAZING GRAPESEED EXTRACT!

You're probably wondering what you can do about the pesky symptoms directly associated with the dramatic hormonal changes during perimenopause.

For perimenopausal support, grapeseed extract has been shown to improve some of the more difficult menopause-related symptoms, such as hot flashes, anxiety, and insomnia as well as improving overall physical symptoms, while at the same time increasing muscle mass and reducing blood pressure.

In one study women aged 40–60 with reported menopausal symptoms received 200 mg daily of grapeseed extract for 8 weeks. Hot flashes were decreased by approximately 48%, insomnia improved by 30%, and anxiety reduced by 20%.

In addition to the results mentioned above, grapeseed extract does not have any phytoestrogen-like activities; nor does it promote hormonal alterations in perimenopausal women. It also has few or no side effects, having been very well tolerated by women participating in trials.

GRAPESEED EXTRACT AND BEAUTY TOO?

With the onset of perimenopause most women experience continual changes in the skin: increased dryness and reduction in collagen leading to loss of skin elasticity and increased wrinkles – or, as my granddaughter says “Grandma, you have squishy skin!” Well, grapeseed extract has a positive effect on this aspect of aging, too.

Antioxidants protect cells from unstable molecules that can cause damage to healthy cells on the skin and in the body, according to the National Cancer Institute. Grape seed extract contains several plant compounds, including oligomeric proanthocyanidins, (OPCs) which are very powerful antioxidants.

Extensive research suggests that grape seed extract is beneficial in many areas of health because of its antioxidant effects. It has been shown to protect the skin from sun damage, bond with collagen as well as promote youthful skin, cell health, elasticity, and flexibility.

Other studies have shown that proanthocyanidins help enhance vision; improve flexibility in joints, arteries, and body tissues such as the heart, and promote blood circulation by strengthening capillaries, arteries, and veins.

PERIMENOPAUSE SMOOTH SAILING

In addition to supplementing with AdrenaSense and grapeseed extract, there's more you can do to keep your perimenopausal passage smooth:

- Support gut health with probiotics.
- Take a minimum of 2000 IU (50 mcg) of vitamin D daily.
- Ensure adequate omega-3 intake.
- Get regular exercise to help with moods, hot flashes, weight management, and bone health.
- Quit smoking, if you haven't already.
- Avoid or minimize hot flash triggers such as caffeine and alcohol (particularly red wine).
- Avoid polyester fabrics which worsen hot flashes or sweating for many women. Choose natural fibres such as cotton.
- Aim for no more than 4 oz of animal products daily, especially if they contain added hormones. Ideally, always choose organic animal products with no added hormones.
- Test your thyroid. Many symptoms diagnosed as perimenopausal are similar to some symptoms of hypothyroidism or low thyroid.

- Test your bone mineral density every 2 years.
- Monitor your cardiovascular risk factors – blood pressure, lipids (including ApoB), blood sugar, C-reactive protein (CRP), and HbA1c. Your risk for heart disease is higher postmenopause.
- Practice healthy stress relief daily, such as enjoyable physical activity, quiet time, deep breathing, prayer, and meditation, all of which have significant health benefits in menopause and beyond.
- Remember, menopause is NOT a disease, but a normal life transition.