Herbs for Menopause

Hot and bothered? Nature may have a remedy.

September 2, 2005 By Julia Chance

With all the risks attributed to hormone replacement therapy—including stroke, heart attack and breast cancer—many menopausal women are looking to natural alternatives to help alleviate discomfort that can accompany the change.

Maintaining a healthy diet is a great place to start. Avoid caffeine and carbonated beverages, which can contribute to bone loss, as well as foods high in saturated fats and sugar, which may inhibit your body's ability to metabolize estrogen.

Some evidence suggests that the herbs black cohosh, dong quai, valerian, St. John's Wort and red clover are helpful in relieving common symptoms, ranging from night sweats to insomnia. The estrogenlike substance phyto-estrogen, found in soy products, nuts, seeds and whole grains, can also help reduce hot flashes. Yet, as promising as these herbal remedies sound, presently there's no conclusive information on their risks, and the effects of herbal treatments vary by individual.

So read up and talk to naturopathic physicians, herbalists and informed health-food store personnel to find out if any of these alternatives are right for you. Also, be sure to consult with your health-care provider before beginning any supplemental regimen.

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