

HEALTH

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C6 Life

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TCM: menopause

Most women reach menopause between the ages of 45 and 55. The transition takes 10 to 15 years.

In traditional Chinese medicine, most menopausal symptoms are seen as functional disorders, the result of a disrupted balance between the internal organs. No two women experience it the same way. Since the whole body is undergoing changes, symptoms such as menstrual irregularities, hot flushes, insomnia, mood swings, vaginal and bladder problems will come and go. The frequency and intensity vary greatly too.

For those who suffer significantly from menopausal symptoms, physicians focus on the disharmony pattern. Most menopausal women seek treatment for hot flushes, but there may also be other symptoms. One woman may complain

of frequent hot flushes but also sweating, palpitations and dizziness. Another may only feel mild hot flushes, but experience severe emotional distress or fatigue.

Menopause is a natural phase, not a medical crisis. Therapies should help organs shift into a new balance. When dealing with specific symptoms, dispelling liver stagnation and reinforcing the spleen is important.

TCM has many prescriptions. The components of herbal remedies can target the internal disharmony through different aspects of the body, such as metabolic processes in the hypothalamus-pituitary-sex gland axis. This maintains the stability of the internal environment, ensuring a gentle hormonal transition.

Among prescriptions for menopause, herbs for dispelling liver and regulating the reproductive system such as white peony root, angelica root and bupleurum root are most often selected. Herbs to enliven the kidney such as epimedium and common curculigo rhizome are the second most popular choices. Herbs to perk up the spleen, such as largehead atractylodes rhizome, poria and licorice root are also useful. Also popular are remedies for hot flushes, such as anemarrhena rhizome and rehmannia root.

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Rose Tse and Jenny Eagleton are with Integrated Chinese Medicine Holdings (icm.com.hk). Before taking any medicine, consult your TCM or medical practitioner.