

**Nawei's Acupuncture Clinic  
559 E. Pikes Peak Ave. #212  
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## **Managing Menopause with Traditional Chinese Medicine**

**By Dr. Nawei Jiang**

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Menopause is a transitional period marking the cessation of ovulation in a woman's body. This time of change may last a few months to several years. Symptoms vary from mild to severe, and are brought on as our bodies try to adapt to decreasing amounts of estrogen. Symptoms include hot flashes, night sweats, insomnia, fatigue, mood swings, memory loss, vaginal dryness or itching, headaches, joint pain, palpitation, osteoporosis and weight gain.

While Western medicine often views menopause as a disease, Chinese medicine recognizes this change in a woman's body chemistry as a natural transitional process. Ideally menopause is relatively uneventful, and in the East it often is, perhaps due to diet and lifestyle. Unfortunately, in the fast paced, stressful lifestyle of the contemporary urban Western woman, underlying patterns of disharmony often give rise to the typical menopausal symptom complex of hot flashes, night sweats, headaches, mood swings, etc.

In Chinese medicine, estrogen is similar to Jing, the essence that we received from our parents at the moment of conception. As we age, Jing declines and can lead to various signs and symptoms including loss of libido, backache, fatigue, and graying hair. Although Jing cannot be replenished according to Chinese medicine, it can be nourished and supported, slowing down the side effects and making the transition more graceful.

Another cause of menopausal symptoms is an underlying deficiency of Kidney Yin. The concept of Yin is one of cooling and nourishing. If Kidney Yin is deficient, heat signs will arise, including hot flashes, night sweats, heart palpitations, and insomnia.

Liver Qi stagnation is also often involved in excessive menopausal symptoms. One of the primary functions of the Liver energetic system is the smooth flow of energy, Blood, and emotions throughout the body. If Liver Qi becomes constrained, often due to diet and/or inappropriate response to stress, symptoms such as mood swings, depression, headaches, and insomnia may arise.

When practitioners of Chinese medicine treat excessive menopausal symptoms, they first determine where the energetic disharmony lies and what organ systems have become imbalanced. Chinese medicine has described strategies to treat these imbalances, without side effects, for thousands of years. Acupuncture is useful to help balance the Qi and to strengthen the internal organ systems. Chinese herbal medicine is often very effective in addressing the underlying Jing, Yin, or Qi disharmonies.

Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioners not only use acupuncture and Chinese herbs to treat menopausal complaints but also advise patients on diet, exercise, and lifestyle, thus treating the whole person and bringing balance to every aspect of the patient's life. These therapies cause no side effects.

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If you are already on HRT, current thinking suggests that slowly tapering off HRT is less likely to trigger symptoms. Treatment with acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine can begin while one is on HRT.

If you are not on HRT, Chinese medicine can provide a safe and effective way to gracefully pass through this transitional period of your life.