

Module 8 Lesson 5

Transcript

Today's topic, menopause. We fear it. We dread it. We're often mystified by it. One of my friends in the throws of it brought a little fan with her to dinner the other day, actually. It kept us company like a little extra guest at the table. While it sounds nice to not have to carry around tampons and pads and deal with the monthly drawbacks of womanhood, we all have to acknowledge that menopause is a marker of maturity. And the physical drawbacks probably outweigh the benefits of not dealing with your monthly flow.

Today I want to talk about what menopause is, how it affects the body, and how we can help clients manage this. Specifically, we'll discuss the physical changes and symptoms that occur during menopause, the role of diet and nutrition and managing these changes, and how you can support clients who are going through menopause. For this lesson, I'm going to walk you through a client story and discuss the interventions put in place to help this person deal with menopause.

My favorite post-menopausal rockstar client, Roxanne, came to me at 58 years old. She'd had a long menopausal stage that spanned over two years. I had seen Roxanne through a bout of thyroid cancer several years earlier, and I knew her to be a really high level and high quality student of her own health. She prioritized her diet and exercise. She slept like a baby. She hydrated. She loved often, stressed less, lived consciously, and nurtured herself. She was a nutritious life poster child. Roxanne had been experiencing hot flashes, mood swings, and insomnia. Her weight was up about five pounds and her words were something like, "I feel invaded by aliens." I put my Lifecycle Nutrition knowledge to work, and here's what I did with Roxanne.

First, I looked at Roxanne's diet. That's really what she wanted to focus on, and we know that hormonal changes are part of menopause, and they make us store fat around the belly. I reworked Roxanne's diet to really emphasize fruits, veggies, whole grains, lean protein, fiber, omega-3 rich foods like salmon and flax, and I limited dairy. I recommended one serving of full fat dairy per day. I checked in with her to limit processed foods, saturated fats, and alcohol. We added maca powder. Maca is a Peruvian cruciferous veggie, sometimes called Peruvian ginseng, that's available in powder form and really easy to add to smoothies and oatmeal. Research finds that it can help with discomfort during menopause, especially with sleep disruption and hot flashes.

Next, speaking of hot flashes, I tackled the hot flashes with strategically placed water. Hot flashes are a sudden and overwhelming feeling of heat in the face and sometimes chest which may cause you to break into a sweat. This is why my friend had the fan with her. Since hot flashes are

related to hormonal drops and can be worsened with stress, anxiety, and being overweight, my water prescription is multipurpose. Hot flashes may last months to several years, and can be accompanied by drenching sweat in the night and sleep disruption.

While there are hormones and medications that may make you feel better, hydrating is one thing that can really contribute to hot flash management. It's something so simple but can actually make a huge difference. I had Roxanne wake up and drink a full glass of water before she did anything else. I also had her drink a full glass of water with each of her three meals and two snacks, and we limited her caffeine and alcohol, which can also worsen hot flashes. If these things didn't improve, she did of course have the option to go back to her doctor for hormonal intervention, and also sometimes antidepressants are prescribed.

And then, since muscle and bone loss are such a loaded loss for women in menopause, I made sure that Roxanne was exercising every day, something she already really enjoyed doing, so this wasn't so tough there. Research is really strong that post-menopausal women should incorporate strength training into their normal routine. So we came up with a workout regimen that built on what she was already doing, what she already loved. We incorporated some modified pushups, and two pound free weights that she did while watching her news program in the evenings. She was already walking for an hour, five to six days a week, which is exactly what I wanted her to do.

Finally, I brushed up on Roxanne's sleep routine. We all know that sleep is essential to mental clarity and weight management. Roxanne was so stressed out that she wouldn't sleep well, which set her up for failure. We mixed up her sleep hygiene by having her take a bath at night, sometimes with a little lavender. She spent three minutes journaling whatever was on her mind. A little lavender essential oil also on her wrist, and a quick meditation before lights out at 10:30. It may not sound like rocket science, and it's not. But sometimes we're so immersed in our lives that it's hard to get perspective.

I was really able to just look critically at Roxanne's issues, step back and make some minor changes that were super impactful for her. I cleaned up her meal plan, zeroed in on the hydration and exercise, and recommitted her to successful sleep. When you have a client struggling as Roxanne did, highlight the places that are vulnerable and start there. It will make a world of difference even with some small changes. And they have to understand how these small changes can be so impactful so they're motivated to put them into action.

Okay, let's do a quick recap of what we covered today. Weight gain, hot flashes, mood swings, and insomnia are common symptoms of menopause. You can help clients make diet and lifestyle adjustments to alleviate these symptoms. Focus on the pillars of a nutritious life, particularly

the food, hydration, exercise, and sleep. Okay, that's almost everything, but focus on the pillars of a nutritious life. For diet, emphasize fruits, veggies, whole grains, lean protein, fiber, and omega-3 rich foods. Try adding in maybe some maca powder. Keep dairy to one serving of full fat per day. Limit processed foods, saturated fats, and of course also alcohol. Focus on hydration to help with hot flashes, so up the water, but limit caffeine and alcohol. Find a workout routine that incorporates strength training to help prevent bone loss. Work on sleep hygiene, such as finding soothing rituals to set the tone for bedtime.

I tell all my menopausal clients that they need to anticipate that you will need to fight harder to keep extra weight off, and that is the biggest barrier in menopausal women, but it absolutely can be done. With that, done with this lesson on menopause. I will see you in the next lesson.