
Certified Specialist Programme in Menopause Wellness Coaching

Sexual Health and Intimacy during Menopause

Sexual health and intimacy are important aspects of overall well-being, and menopause can have a significant impact on these areas of life. In this explanation, we will cover key terms and vocabulary related to sexual health and intimacy during menopause in the context of the Certified Specialist Programme in Menopause Wellness Coaching.

1. **Menopause:** Menopause is a natural biological process that marks the end of a woman's reproductive years. It is defined as the permanent cessation of menstruation, and is typically diagnosed retrospectively after 12 months of amenorrhea (the absence of menstruation). Menopause is caused by a decrease in the production of estrogen and progesterone, two hormones that play a crucial role in the menstrual cycle.
2. **Perimenopause:** Perimenopause is the transitional phase leading up to menopause, during which hormone levels begin to fluctuate and menstrual cycles become irregular. This phase can last for several years, and is characterized by a range of symptoms such as hot flashes, night sweats, mood swings, and vaginal dryness.
3. **Vaginal atrophy:** Vaginal atrophy, also known as atrophic vaginitis, is a condition characterized by thinning, drying, and inflammation of the vaginal walls. This is caused by a decrease in estrogen levels, which can lead to a range of symptoms such as vaginal dryness, itching, burning, and pain during sexual intercourse.
4. **Libido:** Libido, also known as sex drive, is a person's overall desire for sexual activity. Libido can be influenced by a variety of factors, including hormonal changes, stress, and relationship issues. During menopause, a decrease in estrogen and testosterone levels can lead to a decrease in libido.
5. **Dyspareunia:** Dyspareunia is pain during sexual intercourse, which can be caused by a variety of factors such as vaginal dryness, vaginal atrophy, and pelvic floor muscle tension. During menopause, decreased estrogen levels can lead to vaginal dryness and atrophy, which can increase the risk of dyspareunia.
6. **Vulvodynia:** Vulvodynia is chronic pain or discomfort in the vulvar area, which can be caused by a variety of factors such as nerve damage, infections, and hormonal changes. During menopause, decreased estrogen levels can contribute to the development of vulvodynia.
7. **Hormone replacement therapy (HRT):** HRT is a treatment that involves replacing the hormones that the body is no longer producing in sufficient quantities. HRT can be used to alleviate menopause symptoms such as hot flashes, night sweats, and vaginal dryness. There are different types of HRT, including estrogen-only HRT and combined HRT (which contains both estrogen and progestogen).
8. **Local estrogen therapy (LET):** LET is a treatment that involves applying estrogen directly to the vagina in the form of a cream, tablet, or ring. LET can be used to alleviate vaginal symptoms such as dryness, itching, and pain during sexual intercourse.
9. **Lubricants and moisturizers:** Lubricants and moisturizers can be used to alleviate vaginal dryness and discomfort during sexual intercourse. Lubricants are applied directly to the vagina before sexual intercourse, while moisturizers are applied regularly (e.g., once or twice a week) to keep the vaginal tissue hydrated.
10. **Pelvic floor exercises:** Pelvic floor exercises, also known as Kegel exercises, can be used to strengthen the

pelvic floor muscles and alleviate symptoms such as urinary incontinence and pelvic organ prolapse. During menopause, pelvic floor exercises can also help to improve sexual function by increasing blood flow to the pelvic area and enhancing sensation.

11. Mindfulness: Mindfulness is a technique that involves focusing on the present moment in a non-judgmental way. Mindfulness can be used to manage stress, anxiety, and depression, which can all be contributing factors to low libido and sexual dysfunction. During menopause, mindfulness can be used to improve sexual function by increasing body awareness, reducing performance anxiety, and enhancing sexual pleasure.

Practical applications:

- * As a menopause wellness coach, it is important to be aware of the impact of menopause on sexual health and intimacy. This includes understanding the symptoms of menopause, such as vaginal dryness and atrophy, and the impact they can have on sexual function.
- * It is also important to be aware of the treatment options available, such as HRT, LET, lubricants and moisturizers, pelvic floor exercises, and mindfulness. These interventions can be discussed with clients as part of a holistic approach to menopause wellness.
- * Encourage clients to have open and honest conversations with their healthcare providers about their sexual health and concerns. This can help to ensure that they receive appropriate diagnosis and treatment.

Challenges:

- * Many women feel embarrassed or uncomfortable discussing their sexual health, which can make it difficult to address these issues with healthcare providers or wellness coaches.
- * There is a lack of education and awareness about sexual health during menopause, which can make it difficult for women to access accurate information and support.
- * There is a stigma surrounding sexual dysfunction, which can make it difficult for women to seek help or treatment.

In conclusion, menopause can have a significant impact on sexual health and intimacy, and it is important for menopause wellness coaches to be aware of the key terms and vocabulary related to this area. By understanding the symptoms of menopause and the treatment options available, coaches can help clients to manage their symptoms and improve their sexual function. However, it is also important to be aware of the challenges that women may face, such as embarrassment and stigma, and to create a safe and supportive environment for open and honest conversations about sexual health.