



AskDoctor Dr Karuhanga



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Why am I experiencing severe menopause symptoms yet my mother didnt?

I have been told I am in menopause, which causes dizziness, dry mouth, and many other symptoms. Interestingly, my mother, who is now in her 70s, has never experienced the same issues, while I, being younger, am struggling with these symptoms. Why? Nakitende

Dear Nakitende,

A woman between the ages of 45 and 55, who has not had her period for 12 consecutive months, may have reached menopause, which is a natural biological phase. While menopause is often viewed as a health issue, it is actually a transition from having menstrual cycles and the ability to bear children to the cessation of these functions.

This change is primarily caused by the ageing of the ovaries or their surgical removal, leading to a decreased or halted production of female hormones, particularly estrogen. This hormonal shift can result in various symptoms, such



as night sweats, vaginal dryness, weakened bones, weight gain, and mood swings.

Menopausal symptoms can vary significantly from one woman to another regarding type, duration, and intensity. This variability may explain why your mother experienced milder symptoms. Additionally, many mothers tend not to discuss their health concerns with their children, as they may believe their children are too young

to understand these matters.

While genetics greatly influence the timing and severity of menopause symptoms, many women find that their symptoms improve or diminish over time as hormone levels stabilise after menopause. It is possible that your mother experienced this trend.

Some women may not require any treatment for menopausal symptoms, while others may benefit from simple lifestyle changes, such as quitting smoking, engaging in regular physical activity, and maintaining a healthy diet to manage weight and support bone health. It may also be helpful to avoid triggers for hot flashes, such as caffeine, alcohol, and spicy foods.

Staying hydrated by drinking plenty of water can alleviate a dry mouth, and using water-based lubricants may help relieve vaginal dryness.

In Uganda, many people take age-related vitamins, but key vitamins and minerals such as Vitamin D3 and calcium for bone health, B vitamins (especially B6 and B12) for energy and mood, Vitamin E for hot flashes, and isoflavones from soy, which mimic estrogen and help with hormonal balance, may be necessary to address menopausal symptoms.

It is essential to consult your doctor about any symptoms you may experience. They can prescribe hormonal or non-hormonal medications to help manage menopause effectively.

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