



# THE LOVING CHOICE

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## Menopause

By Mary Bieniasz, N.P.

Menopause is the time in a woman's life that signifies the natural and permanent end of menstruation and fertility. The time before the complete cessation of menstruation is known as peri-menopause and can last up to ten years before the last menstrual cycle. During peri-menopause a woman's hormone levels change gradually over these years. This is a natural process of physical maturing. A woman is considered post-menopausal after twelve months without a period.

Peri-menopause can last for several years. Fertility diminishes, and estrogen and progesterone levels become irregular. Menstrual cycles become variable. It is possible to have regular bleeds but not be ovulating. It is also possible to have ovulation without a normal mucus cycle during this time.

Regular bleeding can occur without ovulation. When the level of estrogens falls dramatically, the lining of the uterus is shed, causing bleeding. There can be an increase in patches of mucus seen when there is a surge of increased levels of estrogens. When not sustained, the mucus patches are present for only a day or two. Ovulation does not occur. Ovulation may not occur for several weeks or months during this time. Sometimes estrogen levels are high over a prolonged period of time. We then see spotting from the lining of the uterus.

During peri-menopause ovulation without a normal mucus cycle can occur. The cervix may fail to respond to the estrogen stimulation and not produce mucus. The likelihood of becoming pregnant is greatly decreased. Sometimes the menstruation is a shorter number of days, and very slight. There may be more days of spotting and then a very heavy bleeding pattern with clots of blood. This may be considered normal during the peri-menopausal phase. However, excessive bleeding can cause anemia. This can be easily diagnosed and treated by the primary care provider, or gynecologist.

In July of 2005, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued a warning statement regarding menopausal therapy with synthetic hormones. They stated that: synthetic hormones are carcinogenic to humans, increasing the risk of breast cancer, and in some cases endometrial cancer. This statement was based on expanded research study.

During peri-menopause, decrease in estrogen levels can lead to symptoms such as irritability, hot flashes, insomnia, depression, and osteoporosis. These symptoms can be dealt with on an individual basis without synthetic hormone replacement. Again, menopause is a natural process; your NFP teacher and primary care provider can be excellent resources during this time.



## Ten Million Women Know About IBC! Do you???

Did you know that there is more than one type of breast cancer? Inflammatory Breast Cancer, IBC, may account for up to 6% of breast cancers that women may experience. However, IBC is not detected by a mammogram, and tactile breast exams do not detect a lump. IBC can be diagnosed only with an MRI or biopsy.

IBC is a most aggressive form of cancer. Early detection is essential for treatment and remission.

Symptoms include:

- Inverted nipple
- Rapid increase in breast size
- Redness
- Skin hot to the touch
- Persistent itching
- Orange peel texture to the breast
- Thickening of breast tissue
- Stabbing pain

The web site of Komo 4 News presents four videos:  
The Silent Killer: Inflammatory Breast Cancer (original story)  
July 6<sup>th</sup> IBC Update: A Story of Hope  
Aug. 1 Update: The Word Is Getting Out  
How The Story Spread So Quickly

To view these videos go to <http://komotv.com/ibc>.

This web page also has a list of resource links

- [IBCResearch.org](http://IBCResearch.org) –phone 1-877-STOP-IBC
- [www.ibcsupport.org](http://www.ibcsupport.org)
- [IBC Association](http://IBC Association)
- [www.ibcmemorial.org](http://www.ibcmemorial.org)
- [www.y-me.org](http://www.y-me.org)
- [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)
- [Seattle Cancer Care Alliance](http://Seattle Cancer Care Alliance)
- [www.nci.nih.gov](http://www.nci.nih.gov)
- [www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com)
- [Susan G. Komen Foundation](http://Susan G. Komen Foundation)
- [www.youngsurvival.org](http://www.youngsurvival.org)

Please share this information with others, especially with young women. Young women have died because they were too embarrassed to talk about the changes that happened to their breasts. By sharing this knowledge with others you can help save lives!