

Menopause Bootcamp

Optimize Your Health,
Empower Your Self,
and Flourish as You Age

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Worksheet:

What Should I Ask Myself Before Seeing My Doctor?

You’re now flush with new knowledge about the biological gears at work. Next we’re going to talk about how this relates to *your* experiences. There are some questions that are helpful to ask yourself—and they just so happen to be the questions that your doctor should be asking to ensure that you get the help you deserve during your transition. The answers to these questions will also help you clarify your goals, which are almost always related to your quality of life. Be your own sleuth, write down your findings, and the next time you have a gynecologist or general practitioner appointment, bring them with you. Here are a few questions to start:

QUESTION	ANSWER
Has your sex life changed? Is sex or masturbation painful? Have you noticed changes in your libido?	
How have you been sleeping? Approximately how many hours a night of shut-eye do you get? If you’re not a great sleeper, do you have problems falling asleep, or do you find yourself getting up throughout the night?	
Have you noticed an increased need to urinate, either during the day or while you’re in bed? Do you leak or lose urine during activities?	
Think about where you’re at emotionally. Have you noticed a change in your mood? If so, is it like PMS, where you are a little all over the place for a few days at a time, or do you kind of want to kill the people you love on a fairly consistent basis? (That was my experience at least.)	

QUESTION	YOUR ANSWER
<p>How often do you have hot flashes, and how manageable are they? Are you able to let them pass, or are they starting to affect your day-to-day life? Are they predictable, meaning that you know you'll hot flash before bed, for example, or in the lead-up to a stressful event like a big presentation?</p>	
<p>Do you have a support system? Are there people in your life whom you talk to about the issues going on in your life? Would you find more emotional support helpful?</p>	

Metabolism, Meet Menopause

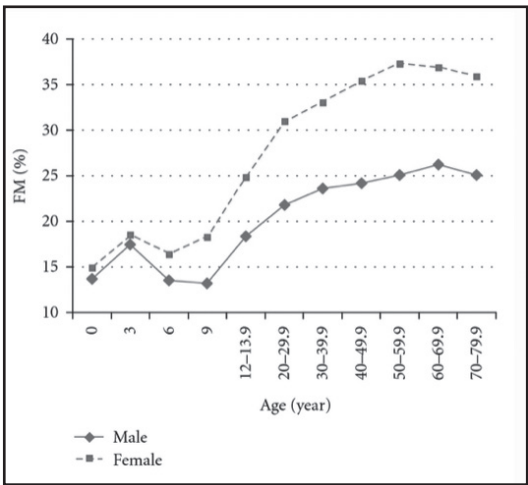


FIGURE 1
Percentage of fat mass (FM) in males and females showing the divergence that occurs at puberty and persists through the premenopausal years.

Symptoms Worksheet

When you visit your doctor with this worksheet in hand, they will be over the moon. We have a much easier time giving you care if we have the data we need.

Hot Flashes

- ◆ How often are you hot flashing? How many days a week or times a day?
- ◆ On a scale of 1 to 10, how bad are the hot flashes? Are you able to feel yourself getting warm but it doesn't change what you're doing (1), or do you need to remove yourself from what you're doing and give yourself an opportunity to recover (10)?

Sleep Disruption

- ◆ How often do you wake up in the middle of the night?
- ◆ Do you know why you are waking up? Is it due to night sweats? Is it due to a need to urinate? Is it due to something else?
- ◆ Do you have problems falling asleep? On average, how long does it take you to fall asleep?
- ◆ Do you have problems staying asleep? How long does it take you to fall back asleep once you've woken up?

Genitourinary Syndrome of Menopause (GSM)

- ◆ Do you have vulvar discomfort while you're doing everyday activities, such as walking or biking?

- ◆ Is penetrative sex or masturbation uncomfortable or painful? Are you experiencing bleeding afterward?
- ◆ If you've tried a lubricant for either everyday use or use during sex, does it work for you? What has your experience been like?
- ◆ How has urination changed for you? Does the need to urinate go straight to a bathroom emergency? Is urination uncomfortable? Do you leak during activities such as coughing, laughing, running, or jumping?
- ◆ Have you noticed any physical or visual changes to your genitals?

Weight Gain

- ◆ How are you feeling in your body? Has that been changing during your menopausal transition?
- ◆ What kind of exercise do you do? How often? When you exercise consistently, how does it make you feel?

Hair, Skin, Teeth, and Nails

- ◆ Have you noticed that your hair texture or durability is changing? What about your nails?
- ◆ Do you have a dermatologist you like? Do you see them for skin checks?
- ◆ What about going to the dentist? Are you getting cleanings and checkups?

Bone, Muscle, and Joint Health

- ◆ Are you noticing any pain or discomfort during movement?
- ◆ If you do get injured, what do you do to ease the pain? How long does it take to heal?

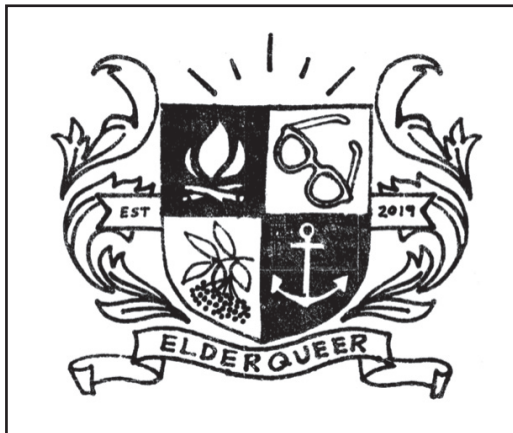
Overall

- ◆ How are you feeling emotionally? Are you experiencing depressive symptoms, such as a lack of motivation, sadness, or fatigue? If so, how many days a week? How is it impacting your day-to-day life? For instance, does it stop you from going out with friends and family?
- ◆ What is your favorite physical activity? How often do you do it? Do you move every day or almost every day?
- ◆ Does what you're eating make you feel good? Does it help you have sustained energy throughout the day, or does your energy level spike and dip?
- ◆ Are there changes happening in your body—any changes—that you're curious about or that are causing you worry? Menopause can be at the root of lots of these. Sometimes there's a fix, sometimes not. But bring them up with your doctor regardless!

Prejudice in Medicine

I asked Bradbury about the Elderqueer logo. “There’s wisdom, warmth, strength, and healing,” she explained. “What I try to convey is older people have all of those things to impart on younger people in the community.” This goes against so much of what aging people in all communities experience that spans all genders—including men: the idea that older folks are not able to keep up, have less to contribute, ought to make their way to the sidelines. It ties back to capitalism: our worth has been commodified; the less productive we are, the less value we have. Bradbury summed it up pretty tidily: “So many things attached to the idea of being older that are just fucked.”

The social and psychological value of groups such as Elderqueer



Elderqueer Crest Artwork by Kavel Rafferty

Consider Botanical Supplements

How to Make Mary's Rasa Tea

Into a large pot, place $\frac{1}{4}$ cup each fennel seeds, fenugreek seeds, licorice bark, and cinnamon bark. Add 4 cups of water. Bring to a boil over medium heat, then remove, cover, and let steep for at least 30 minutes. Strain out the herbs, refrigerate when the tea is at room temperature, and drink a small cup daily.

Substitutions and modifications:

In place of/in addition to fennel: anise, grated fresh ginger

In place of/in addition to fenugreek: burdock root, Indian sarsaparilla

In place of/in addition to licorice bark: shatavari, marshmallow root

In place of/in addition to cinnamon bark: cardamom seeds, ginger

Herb/ Supplement	What It Is For	Dosage	What You Should Know	Brand Name/ Manufacturer
Berberine	Improvement of insulin level, glucose level, metabolism; weight loss	Follow dosage directions on packaging	Do not take if you have kidney disease	Enzymedica
Cinnamon	Improvement of insulin level, glucose level, metabolism; weight loss	420 mg per day	Must use the supplement, not the kitchen spice. And do not exceed this dosage.	Mountain Rose Herbs
Maitake mushroom extract	Improvement of metabolism	50 mg per day		Mountain Rose Herbs
Inositol	Improvement of metabolism	400 mg three times a day, not to exceed four months' duration	Do not take if you have kidney or liver disease	Metagenic
Ashwagandha	Improvement of mood; alleviation of stress	500 mg three times a day, not to exceed 6 g per day	Do not take if you have thyroid disease	Banyan Botanicals
Shatavari	Improvement of mood; alleviation of stress	Follow dosage directions on packaging	Do not take if you have estrogen-dependent cancers	Banyan Botanicals
5HTP	Improvement of mood; alleviation of stress	100–300 mg three times a day	Do not take if you are on an SSRI or tramadol	Metagenics
Holy basil (tulsi) tincture	Alleviation of stress; improvement of energy; lessening of fatigue	2–3 mL per day		Banyan Botanicals
Rhodiola	Improvement of mood; alleviation of stress	200–400 mg per day		Mountain Rose Herbs
Passionflower	Improvement of mood, sleep; alleviation of stress	320 mg at bedtime or three times a day		Mountain Rose Herbs
Lion's mane mushrooms	Improvement of mood, cognition; alleviation of anxiety	Follow dosage directions on packaging	Do not take if you have asthma or allergies	Mountain Rose Herbs

Herb/ Supplement	What It Is For	Dosage	What You Should Know	Brand Name/ Manufacturer
Maca root powder	Alleviation of stress; improvement of mood, energy, libido	75–100 mg per day or 3 g per day in a smoothie		Mountain Rose Herbs
D-mannose	Prevention of urinary tract symptoms	500 mg two times a day		Ellura (its formula also contains cranberry)
Cranberry extract	Prevention of urinary tract symptoms	Follow dosage directions on packaging		Mountain Rose Herbs
Diindolylmethane (DIM)	Overall estrogen dominance; well-being	100–200 mg per day	Do not take if you have liver or kidney disease	Metagenics
Indole-3-carbinol (alternative for DIM)	Overall estrogen dominance; well-being	250–600 mg per day	Do not take if you have liver or kidney disease	Metagenics
Vitex/chaste tree berry	Overall estrogen dominance; improvement of PMS; possibly alleviation of hot flashes	Use as directed; depends on brand		Vital Nutrients, Vitex 750
Russian raspberry	Alleviation of hot flashes	Follow dosage directions on packaging	Do not take if you have estrogen-dependent cancers	Metagenics, Estrovera
Black cohosh	Alleviation of hot flashes	20 mg two times per day		Remifemin
Pycnogenol/ French marine pine bark extract	Alleviation of hot flashes	Follow dosage directions on packaging		Kindra Core Support
Nettle infusion/tea	Hair loss			Mountain Rose Herbs
CBD/CBN	Alleviation of anxiety; improvement of mood, sleep, sexual health	Follow dosage directions on packaging		Cannapy Health
Hair wellness blend	Hair loss	Follow dosage directions on packaging	Do not take if you have estrogen-dependent cancers	Nutrafol

Start a Menopause Bootcamp

Here's the beauty of the book you're reading. Most all of the insights I have as a physician and Ayurvedic practitioner are contained in these pages. Of course, there's a different dynamic in person; it's technicolor rather than black and white. But my presence isn't the thing that makes Menopause Bootcamp sessions come to life—it's the collective. My recommendation would be to invite a group to meet once a month for four months. All of the participants could get a copy of this book or designate one to be the go-to person for the info. Each meeting can focus on one part. Here are some ideas.

- ♦ Start with a short guided meditation or guided breathwork (you can use an app). This quiet moment of reflection designates a distinct starting point for the bootcamp, helping to separate it from whatever's going on in the other parts of your life. Use this time to set ground rules: what is said here stays here, boundaries are respected, and creating a safe space is tantamount.
- ♦ During the first session, even if people already know one another, go around and introduce yourselves, say why you decided to join, and

offer one fact about yourself. Sharing is *not* compulsory. Some people need to warm up to the process.

- ◆ After that, and in subsequent sessions, use one of the conversation starters below to instigate sharing and create the safe environment that's a hallmark of the Menopause Bootcamp.
- ◆ Go over the part of the book designated for that month. Talk about some of the overall learnings from that section, along with actionable suggestions. Invite conversations about people's experiences, what has worked for them and what hasn't, and workshop ideas to help those gathered integrate some of the suggestions from this book into their own lives.
- ◆ Spend ten to fifteen minutes talking about self-acceptance and creating trust. These conversations can imprint themselves on people's hearts.
- ◆ If it's within your capabilities, invite a bodywork specialist, such as a yoga instructor or personal trainer, to lead the group through moves that work the core, focusing on form, function, and everyday movements. An online leader works great for this, either something that's prerecorded or done live for your group.
- ◆ In closing, go around the group and invite the participants to say one bit of information they learned, an action item they want to try, and one thing they're grateful for. Thank everyone for their generosity of spirit. A post-Menopause Bootcamp lunch is always fun, too.

After the four initial sessions, feel free to meet as often as feels good. Use the conversation starters to go into deeper discussions. Brainstorm ways in which you can help others going through the menopausal transition, including volunteering your time or educating yourself about the experiences of others in different countries or communities. If your participation in the bootcamp was powerful, consider forming a new group to share information from the book and learnings from your friends.

Twelve Conversation Starters

1. Are there people in your life you want to share your experience with but don't feel you can? What is stopping you? How can you overcome the barrier?
2. What are you most looking forward to in menopause?
3. Does menopause impact you at work? What could your workplace do to make things better for you?
4. For many, menopause is a time of liberation. What are you feeling liberated from?
5. Who is your postmenopause icon? Whose power do you emulate?
6. Would you like to talk about your sex life or self-pleasure? What's working for you these days?
7. When you're feeling really good, how do you channel your good vibes? What about when you're feeling down? How do you lift yourself out of that place?
8. How has covid-19 made you change the way you see yourself in the world?
9. Is there something that's stopping you from living the kind of life you want to? Are there things your family and friends can do to take down those barriers?
10. When something goes awry in your life—menopause related or not—do you have ways to ask for help?
11. How do you see yourself one, five, and ten years from now? What priorities does your future vision embody? Freedom? Adventure? Serenity? Love? Health?
12. How can you reach out to others not in your immediate circle or community to support them through their menopause journey?

You are now officially a graduate of the Menopause Bootcamp! I challenge you to say the word *menopause* out loud often—often enough that you don't even notice the taboo you are slowly chipping

away at. Know that you are part of a tribe that is as ancient, mysteriously enchanting, and powerful as the hills. The power derives from the confidence of your experiences and the willingness to share who you really are with yourself and a world that desperately needs loving wisdom. I hope you take great care in getting to know this part of yourself, as much as you would a new friend, lover, or member of your inner circle. I hope you realize how honored I am to serve her and watch her evolve. I hope you understand that I learn from her just as much as I have shared.