

# Alternative Treatments for Menopause

By C.J. Franz  
Staff Writer

According to a Harvard study; stress, depression, poor diet, smoking, and a lack of exercise can all attribute to hormonal imbalance. PMS, perimenopause and menopause, are the result. When hormonal imbalance is left untreated, women can begin seeing signs of menopause in their thirties.

A common misconception is that a woman will experience menopausal symptoms because her body is not producing enough estrogen. But unfortunately, it is not that simple. A woman's health depends on a delicate balance of hormones produced by the brain and the ovaries. The ovaries produce estrogen and progesterone – the levels of which vary throughout the month. The brain produces serotonin and endorphins. If the level of one of these hormones is out of balance, a woman's emotional and physical health is compromised. Symptoms can include: hypersensitivity, hot flashes, irritability, loss of libido, memory failure, fatigue, and depression.

Despite the fact that 475 million women are menopausal, traditional treatment options are limited and sometimes worrisome. On the topic of hormone replacement therapy, Stanford researcher Rachel Manber, Ph.D. offers, "There is awareness among women that HRT is not risk free, and women are concerned about it. It is important that we explore alternative options."

Dr. Yael Nir, a Stanford researcher shares, "The solutions offered by medicine today are not satisfactory." Exploring alternative treatment options, Stanford conducted a study using acupuncture to treat menopausal symptoms. "My hope," says Dr. Nir, "was that the symptoms would



*Alternative medicine specialist  
Dr. Mindy Dai.*

become less severe, but some of the women no longer experienced symptoms at all. That was quite a surprise."

I asked Dr. Mindy Dai, an alternative medicine specialist in Burbank, to explain how acupuncture is used to treat hormonal imbalances. "In traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), menstruation is associated with the [Chinese] Kidneys (not the Western organ) and the Chong and Ren channels. Kidney Qi (che') is the basis from which the human body grows, develops and reproduces. According to TCM, kidney deficiency is the root cause of menopausal symptoms because of the Kidney's pivotal role in a woman's sexual and reproductive functions. In my practice, I use acupuncture and Chinese herbal therapy to treat menopause by strengthening Kidney Qi (the flow of energy) through the Chong and Ren channels. The Kidneys are considered key to the proper functioning of the urinary system, reproductive, endocrine and nervous systems.

"My goal is to determine at what points the flow of energy has stopped. If I can re-establish that flow, my patients are usually

amazed with the results," she shares. "With patients suffering from hormonal imbalance, I prefer to combine acupuncture with customized herbal formulas. I tend to see the best results that way." Unlike "symptom treatment only" approaches, Dr. Dai encourages her patients to take an active role in their treatment. In addition to alternative treatments, she offers patients customized dietary plans, and exercise regimens.

Dr. Dai holds numerous degrees in medical science and oriental medicine. Her practice in Burbank, specializes in holistic treatment thru acupuncture, Chinese massage, detoxification and ancient Chinese herbal nutrition. She just attended a seminar by Dr. Lani Simpson, focusing on alternative treatments for menopause and PMS. The seminar has inspired her to research various brands of natural hormone creams and their effectiveness so that she can make suggestions to patients who may be interested.

According to the North American Menopause Society, women experience menopause as early as 30 and as late as 60, with 51, being the average. Nine out of ten women experience perimenopause – a period of altered menstrual cycles – before menopause, with perimenopause lasting approximately four years. Menopause can last anywhere between six to 13 years.

For more information on menopause, visit [www.menopause.org](http://www.menopause.org). If you would like to ask Dr. Mindy Dai about alternative treatments, she can be reached at (818) 842-8177 or (818) 216-4887, or you can send her an email at [minhong-dai@pol.net](mailto:minhong-dai@pol.net). Her office is located on W. Alameda Ave., in Burbank, across from the NBC studios.