

# Plan for a Healthier, Happier Menopause



Some women dread menopause, associating the change of life with hot flashes, painful intercourse, mood swings, and the specter of old age. As with menstruation and childbearing, menopause is a rite of passage that has some discomforts. But you can help to prevent or alleviate many of them.

- To maintain a positive outlook, share your feelings with friends, stay active, and take an interest in others in your community.
- To lessen mood swings, cut down on caffeine, alcohol, and sweets.
- To help maintain hormonal balance, do regular exercise. Lose weight if you are overweight.

Kegel exercises (named for the individual who invented them) can help to keep your pelvic and vaginal muscles toned, preventing a prolapsed uterus or poor bladder control, both of which sometimes accompany menopause. To feel these muscles at work, stop and start your urine flow in midstream the next time you use the toilet. Then practice the two exercises that follow.

- Squeeze the pelvic/vaginal muscles for 3 seconds, then relax them for 3 seconds. Do this ten times, three times a day.
- Squeeze and relax the same muscles as quickly as possible. Repeat ten times, three times a day.