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Menopause

Patient name: _____ Admission: _____

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- I. **The client can define menopause.**
 - A. A female who has not had a period for 12 consecutive months has reached menopause.
 - B. Symptoms of menopause can start in the 30- to 40-year age group and last into the 50- to 60-year age group.
 - C. Menopause begins when ovaries start making less estrogen and progesterone.
 - D. The transition of menopause is divided into two stages:
 - Perimenopause
 - Postmenopause
 - E. Menopause can also be the result of medical or surgical interventions. They are
 - Hysterectomy
 - Chemotherapy and radiation therapy

- II. **The client can list signs and symptoms of menopause.**
 - A. Irregular periods
 - B. Decreased fertility, in which ovulation can fluctuate
 - C. Vaginal and urinary changes
 - D. Hot flashes
 - E. Sleep disturbances and night sweats
 - F. Changes in appearance—usually weight gain
 - G. Emotional and cognitive changes

- III. **The client can list methods of treatment and measures to manage menopause.**
 - A. Hormone therapy. Estrogen therapy continues to be used to treat hot flashes and vaginal discomfort. Talk with physician regarding benefits versus risk factor for your individual case (personal and family medical history) regarding the use of hormone therapy.
 - B. Other medications that might be used to treat symptoms of menopause are
 - 1. Low-dose antidepressants
 - 2. Neurontin to reduce hot flashes

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- 3. Clonidine and other similar medications used to treat high blood pressure and hot flashes
- 4. Medications to reduce bone loss and osteoporosis
- 5. Vaginal estrogen creams, ring, or tablet to relieve vaginal dryness
- 6. Discussion of any side effects with physician to evaluate benefit of medication.
- C. Other measures to promote wellness are
 - 1. To avoid hot flashes dress in layers, and try to pinpoint any triggers for them. Some triggers are hot beverages, spicy foods, alcohol, and hot weather.
 - 2. For vaginal discomfort or dryness with intercourse, try some of the over-the-counter water-based vaginal lubricants or moisturizers.
 - 3. Encourage good sleep habits. Avoid caffeinated beverages and exercise before bedtime. Learn more about relaxation exercises and techniques.
 - 4. Strengthen pelvic floor using Kegel exercises. This can also help avoid urinary incontinence.
 - 5. Eat a balanced diet. Choose fruits, vegetables, and whole grains and limit saturated fats, oils, and sugars. Talk with your physician about the use of calcium supplements. Strive to lose weight if overweight.
 - 6. Do not smoke.
 - 7. Do moderate exercise at least 30 minutes on most days.
 - 8. Schedule regular checkups for mammograms, Pap tests, and any other indicated testing.
 - 9. Discuss any herbal products or supplements with physician before using them.
- D. The client can list possible complications often associated with menopause.
 - 1. The risk of cardiovascular disease increases as estrogen levels decrease.

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2. Osteoporosis can occur. Maintain adequate calcium intake. The use of Vitamin D may enhance the absorption of calcium. Weight-bearing exercises also help keep healthy bones.
3. Urinary incontinence may appear as a result of vagina and urethral tissue losing elasticity.
4. Weight gain may be a problem. Try to balance exercise level with caloric intake to prevent weight gain.

RESOURCES

The National Women’s Health Information Center
www.4woman.gov/

National Osteoporosis Foundation
www.nof.org/

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
www.acog.org/

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