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AARP Home » AARP Blog » Health Talk » Grandmas Stay Sharp by Babysitting – But Don't Overdo It

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Health Talk

Posted on 04/17/2014

Grandmas Stay Sharp by Babysitting – But Don't Overdo It

by Candy Sagon | Comments

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Babysitting the grandkids can help boost Grandma's **brainpower**, but doing it too much may have the opposite effect – possibly because Grandma is feeling resentful, new research finds.

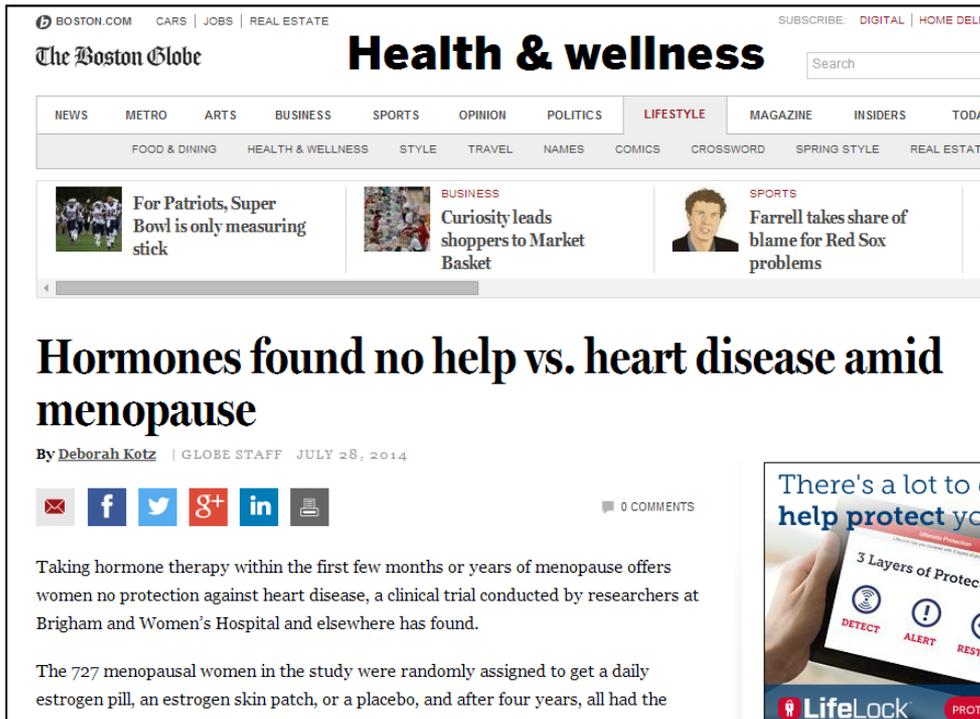
The **study** of 120 Australian grandmothers, ages 57 to 68, wanted to determine whether **mind**ing grandchildren played a role in helping postmenopausal women stay sharp as they aged. Previous research had shown that staying involved in social activities with friends or relatives helps improve cognitive function in older adults.



This study was published online April 8 in *Menopause*, the journal of the North American Menopause Society (NAMS), and is “the first report on the effect of grandparenting on women’s cognitive health,” NAMS Executive Director Margery Gass, MD, said.

Menopause in the News

The Boston Globe



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For Patriots, Super Bowl is only measuring stick

BUSINESS Curiosity leads shoppers to Market Basket

SPORTS Farrell takes share of blame for Red Sox problems

Hormones found no help vs. heart disease amid menopause

By [Deborah Kotz](#) | GLOBE STAFF JULY 28, 2014

0 COMMENTS

Taking hormone therapy within the first few months or years of menopause offers women no protection against heart disease, a clinical trial conducted by researchers at Brigham and Women's Hospital and elsewhere has found.

The 727 menopausal women in the study were randomly assigned to get a daily estrogen pill, an estrogen skin patch, or a placebo, and after four years, all had the

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“I think it calls into question the theory that the timing of hormone therapy initiation makes a difference” for preventing heart disease, “but the good news is we don’t see great harm in younger women, and that’s reassuring,” said **Dr. Margery Gass, executive director for The North American Menopause Society.**



Menopause in the News

CBS NEWS Video US World Politics Entertainment Health Money

By JESSICA FIRGER CBS NEWS / April 9, 2014, 1:02 PM

Grandma's brain benefits from time with the little ones



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Most grandmothers say there is no pleasure that quite compares to spending time with your offspring's little ones. And now, a new study finds **grandchildren don't only add joy to grandma's golden years**. The kids may also keep her mentally sharp.

The study, published in *Menopause*, the journal of the North American Menopause Society, finds post-menopausal women who spend time taking care of grandkids lower their risk of developing Alzheimer's disease and other cognitive disorders. However, too much time with the grandchildren – five or more days a



The study, published in *Menopause*, the journal of The North American Menopause Society, finds that postmenopausal women who spend time taking care of grandkids lower their risk of developing Alzheimer disease and other cognitive disorders.



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Menopause in the News

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HEALTH NEWS FLASH

More News On Vitamin D And Menopause From The North American Menopause Society

By Ellen Dolgen | April 21, 2014 0 Comments

Low Vitamin D May Not Be A Culprit In Menopause Symptoms

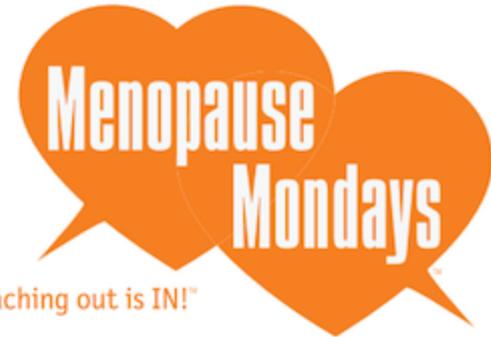
A new study from the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) shows no significant connection between vitamin D levels and menopause symptoms. The study was published online in *Menopause*, the journal of The North American Menopause Society.

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A new study from the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) shows no significant connection between vitamin D levels and menopause symptoms. The study was published online in ***Menopause***, the journal of The North American Menopause Society.

Menopause in the News



Effect of low vitamin D levels for women in menopause still unclear

LeBlanc E. *Menopause*. 2014;doi:10.1097/GME.0000000000000238.

April 23, 2014

Whether low levels of vitamin D play a role in menopause-related symptoms still remains to be proven, according to research published online in *Menopause*.

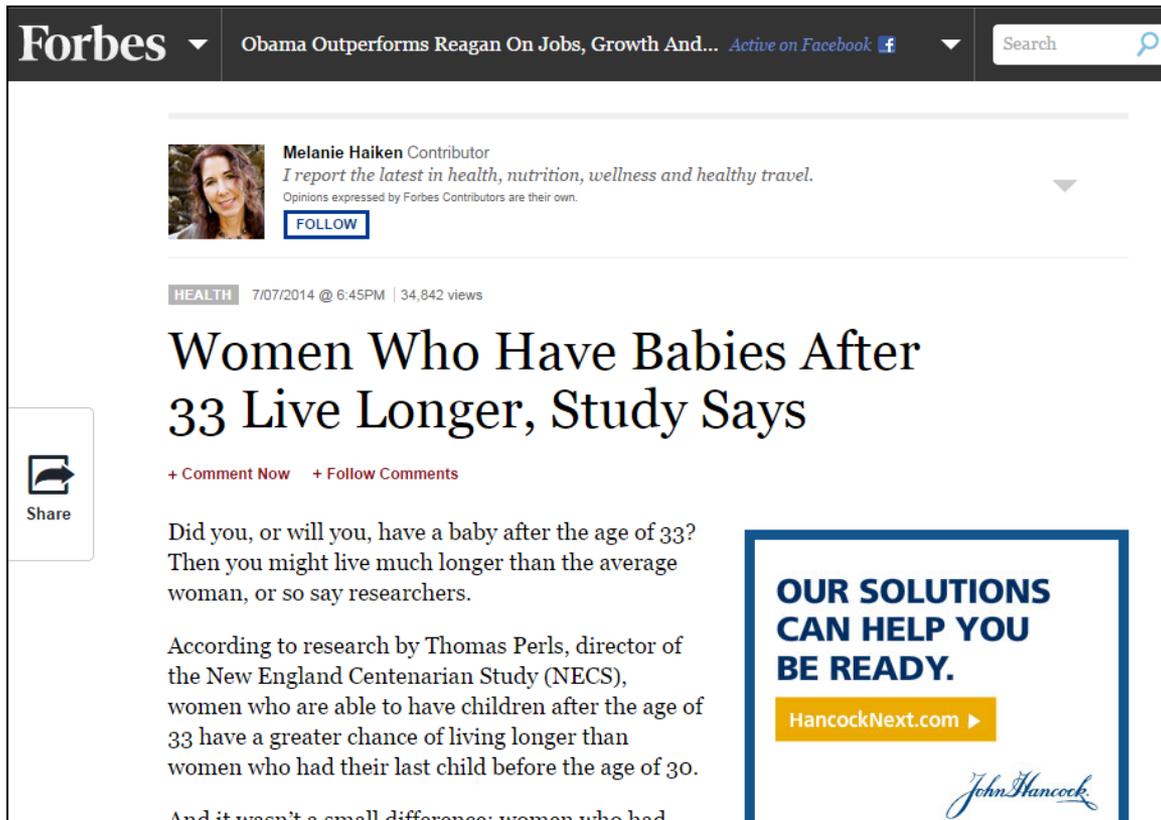
In a subanalysis of the Women's Health Initiative, **Erin LeBlanc, MD**, and colleagues randomly selected 1,407 women from 26,104 potentially eligible participants of the program's calcium and vitamin D trial of postmenopausal women aged 51 to 80 years. Using blood samples collected during that trial's baseline visit, researchers measured 25-hydroxyvitamin D levels.

Information about menopause-related symptoms also was obtained at baseline by questionnaire. It included overall number of symptoms and composite measures of sleep disturbance, emotional well-being and energy/fatigue, as well as individual symptoms. After exclusions for missing data, 530 women (mean age, 66 years) were included in these analyses.

The researchers examined the cross-sectional association between 25-(OH)D levels and symptoms, based on current clinical definitions of vitamin D deficiency, insufficiency and sufficiency.

“With so many women taking vitamin D supplements these days, it is good to know what it can and cannot do,” **Margery Gass, MD, executive director for The North American Menopause Society**, said in a press release. “We need to be realistic about our expectations.”

Menopause in the News



The screenshot shows the Forbes website interface. At the top, the Forbes logo is on the left, followed by a navigation bar with the headline "Obama Outperforms Reagan On Jobs, Growth And..." and a search bar. Below this is a contributor profile for Melanie Haiken, with a "FOLLOW" button. The main article is titled "Women Who Have Babies After 33 Live Longer, Study Says" and is categorized under "HEALTH". It includes a "Share" button on the left and a "HancockNext.com" advertisement on the right.

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 **Melanie Haiken** Contributor
I report the latest in health, nutrition, wellness and healthy travel.
Opinions expressed by Forbes Contributors are their own.
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HEALTH 7/07/2014 @ 6:45PM | 34,842 views

Women Who Have Babies After 33 Live Longer, Study Says

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Did you, or will you, have a baby after the age of 33? Then you might live much longer than the average woman, or so say researchers.

According to research by Thomas Perls, director of the New England Centenarian Study (NECS), women who are able to have children after the age of 33 have a greater chance of living longer than women who had their last child before the age of 30.

And it wasn't a small difference: women who had

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Forbes

This study, scheduled for print publication in ***Menopause***, the journal of **The North American Menopause Society**, in January 2015, provides evidence that the genetic variations that go into making a woman fertile longer also may increase her chances of having an unusually long life span, researchers say.



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PMS Not Linked to Hot Flashes Later, Study Finds

But, women with PMS are more likely to have memory, concentration issues after menopause

By **Kathleen Doherty**
HealthDay Reporter

THURSDAY, June 5, 2014 (HealthDay News) -- Women who experience premenstrual syndrome, or PMS, won't necessarily suffer from hot flashes when they go through menopause, according to a new study.

However, women who have PMS are more likely to report other common menopause complaints, such as memory and concentration problems, the researchers found.

"We were not able to detect any clear association between menopausal hot flashes and previous PMS," said study researcher Dr. Tomi Mikkola, associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Helsinki University Central Hospital in Finland.

"However, women with PMS are more likely to experience impaired quality of life when entering menopause," he said.

The study was published recently in the journal *Menopause*.

PMS refers to a group of symptoms linked to the monthly menstrual cycle. It occurs about one to two weeks before the period starts. Symptoms of PMS include mood changes, headache, breast tenderness, bloating, fatigue, sleep changes and food cravings, according to background information in the study.

Estimates of how many women suffer from PMS vary greatly. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists estimates about 85 percent of women report at least one PMS symptom.

For the study, Mikkola and his colleagues included information from 120 healthy postmenopausal women who answered questions about symptoms they had experienced when they still had periods. They also answered questions about their current health and symptoms. The women were between 48 and 55 years old. None had taken hormone replacement therapy.

About 90 percent of the women said they had premenstrual symptoms earlier in their lives. About half said the symptoms hampered their ability to work well or hurt their social relations.

If the women had experienced premenstrual symptoms at menopause they were more likely



Dr. Margery Gass, executive director of The North American Menopause Society, reviewed the findings of this study. "The study is very interesting and could help women and their [healthcare] providers better understand all the symptoms of menopause," Gass said.

Menopause in the News

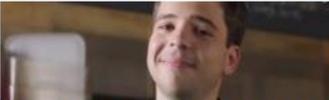


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Menopause Got You Sleepless?
 Posted: 03/21/2014 6:25 pm EDT | Updated: 05/21/2014 5:59 am EDT



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In fact, **The North American Menopause Society (NAMS)** lists trouble falling asleep as one of the five main symptoms of menopause.

Menopause in the News



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New terminology to 'banish menopause stigma'

09.09.2014 In: Menopause ([/news/womens-health-newsfeed/menopause](#))

A new term to describe genital and urinary health problems could make postmenopausal women more comfortable in talking about their symptoms.

This is the view of the North American Menopause Society (NAMS) and the International Society for the Study of Women's Sexual Health.

In a paper published online in NAMS journal Menopause, the two organisations argue that the phrase "genitourinary syndrome of menopause" (GSM) is a medically accurate term that has no awkward connotations for women.

The bodies have developed the term to promote a new way of talking about the sexual, urinary and genital health problems that face women who have undergone the menopause.

They say they are seeking to remove the stigma attached to the subject, making it easier for women to seek medical help and make the right healthcare choices as a result.

GSM affects around half of all menopausal women, the bodies claim, but many are unaware of the range of treatments on offer because they are not comfortable talking about their symptoms with doctors.

"The term 'GSM' will make discussing the problems so much easier, similar to the way 'ED' changed our ability to talk about impotence," says Dr Margery Gass, executive director of NAMS.



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"The new term 'GSM' will make discussing the problems so much easier, similar to the way 'ED' changed our ability to talk about impotence," says **Dr. Margery Gass**, executive director of NAMS.



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Older moms much more likely to become old ladies, study says



Women capable of bearing children until well into their 30s or even 40s may not only confer some benefits to their grandchildren, but they also are more likely to have long lives themselves. (Francine Orr / Los Angeles Times)

By **MELISSA HEALY**

JUNE 25, 2014, 7:27 PM

Attention, women who were declared to be of "advanced maternal age" even as their bellies swelled with life, who chased after a toddler with more patience than vigor, and who have simultaneously navigated menopause and parented an adolescent: Late-life mothering -- if it occurred naturally at least -- doubles your odds of living to an unusually old age, according to a new study.

Compared with a woman who wrapped up her childbearing by the age of 29, a woman whose last child was born after she reached the age of 33 was roughly twice as likely to survive long enough

So what, you ask, links the length of a woman's childbearing years and her likelihood of becoming the oldest of old ladies? What doesn't kill women makes them stronger? The kids need mom to stick around. Maybe all those things, suggest the authors of this study, which was published in ***Menopause*, the journal of The North American Menopause Society.**



Menopause in the News

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Time Spent With Grandkids Might Boost Women's Brain Power

HealthDay

By -- Robert Preidt

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FRIDAY, April 11, 2014 (HealthDay News) – Spending a little time each week caring for grandkids may help older women stay mentally sharp, a new study finds.

But there's a potential downside: Taking care of the grandkids five days a week or more may have a negative impact on brain power, the researchers reported.

The study included 186 Australian women, aged 57 to 68, who took three different tests of mental acuity. Those who spent one day a week looking after grandchildren did best on two of the three tests.

However, those who looked after grandchildren for five or more days a week did worse on one of the tests, which evaluated memory and mental processing speed.



“Because grandmothering is such an important and common social role for postmenopausal women, we need to know more about its effects on their future health. This study is a good start,”

Dr. Margery Gass, executive director of The North American Menopause Society, said.

Menopause in the News

The New York Times

Body March 13, 2014, 10:18 am

Vitamin D May Lower Cholesterol

By NICHOLAS BAKALAR

Many observational studies have suggested that vitamin D may have benefits for heart health. Now a randomized trial has found that vitamin D appears to reduce levels of LDL, or “bad” cholesterol.

Researchers randomly assigned 576 postmenopausal women to either a daily dose of 400 units of vitamin D and 1,000 milligrams of calcium, or a placebo. They followed them for three years.

By the end of the study, published in *Menopause*, the vitamin D group had significantly higher serum levels of vitamin D, and a small but notable drop in LDL.

The New York Times

Researchers randomly assigned 576 postmenopausal women to either a daily dose of 400 units of vitamin D and 1,000 mg of calcium or a placebo. They followed them for 3 years. By the end of the study, **published in *Menopause***, the vitamin D group had significantly higher serum levels of vitamin D and a small but notable drop in LDL-C.

Menopause in the News



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From 

PMS Not Linked to Hot Flashes Later, Study Finds

Published: June 5, 2014 5:26 PM
By Kathleen Doherty HealthDay Reporter

Related media



Women who experience premenstrual syndrome, or PMS, won't necessarily suffer from hot flashes when they go through menopause, according to a new study.

However, women who have PMS are more likely to report other common menopause complaints, such as memory and concentration problems, the researchers found.

"We were not able to detect any clear association between menopausal hot flashes and previous PMS," said study researcher Dr. Tomi Mikkola, associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Helsinki University Central Hospital in Finland.

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This study was published recently in the journal *Menopause*. Dr. Margery Gass, executive director of The North American Menopause Society, reviewed the findings. "The study is very interesting and could help women and their [healthcare] providers better understand all the symptoms of menopause," Gass said.

Menopause in the News



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Women Seem to Benefit From Acupuncture for Hot Flashes

News | August 11, 2014 | Menopause
By OBGYN.net Staff

Acupuncture has repeatedly proved its ability to provide relief of menopause-associated hot flashes, revealed a review of a dozen studies.

The frequency and severity of hot flashes are significantly reduced by acupuncture, but other quality of life improvements were also noted in women who received the needle insertion technique. Other quality of life benefits unveiled in the meta-analysis included significant decreases in the psychological, somatic, and urogenital scores using the Menopause Rating Scale, the authors noted.

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ObGyn.net

These findings were published in August in *Menopause*, the journal of The North American Menopause Society. “More than anything, this review indicates that there is still much to be learned relative to the causes and treatments of menopausal hot flashes,” said **NAMS Executive Director Margery Gass, MD.**

Menopause in the News

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Collections

Female trouble, 50-plus



The Estring ring releases low-dose estrogen to treat vaginal atrophy. (Pfizer Inc.)



Genital dryness and painful sex are common in postmenopausal women, but are little reported or discussed. Experts say it doesn't have to be that way.

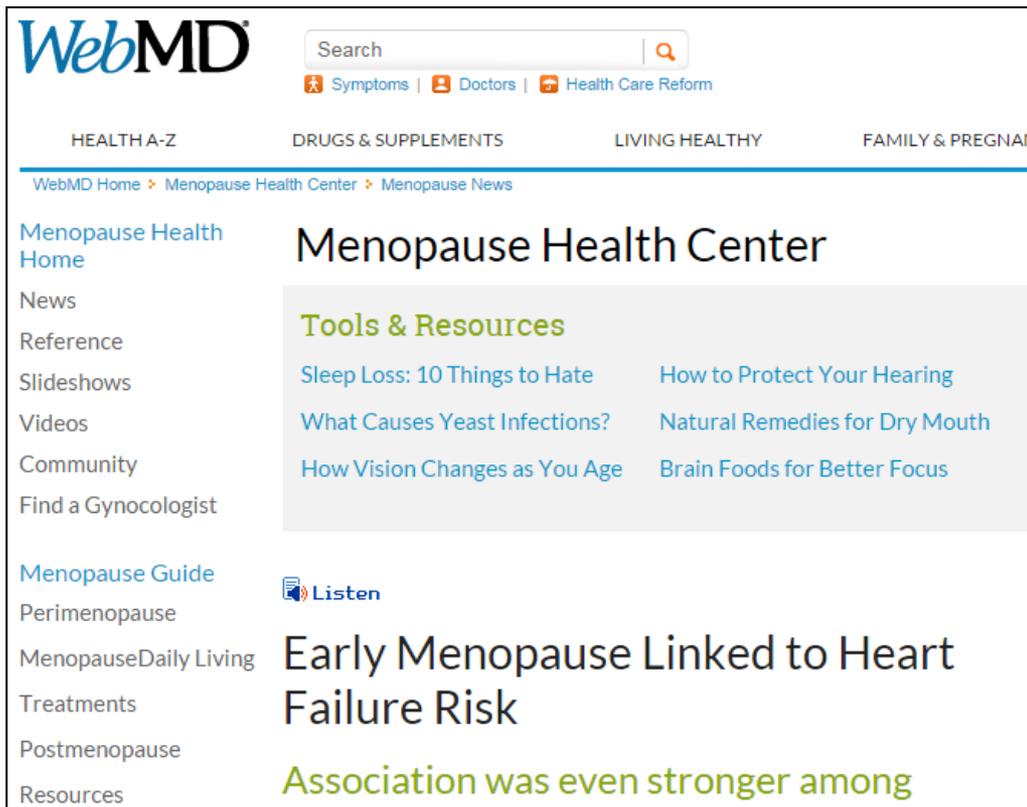
By Melissa Dribben, Inquirer Staff Writer
POSTED: March 28, 2014

Unlike their mothers, the girls of the 1960s received a barrage of information preparing them for puberty. They were herded into darkened schoolrooms where they giggled through corny black-and-white movies about how their bodies were about to change. They pored over pamphlets with ram's-horn diagrams of fallopian tubes. They studied books filled with helpful advice about coping with body odor and "feminine protection."

GALLERY: The Estring ring releases low-dose estrogen to treat vaginal... (Pfizer Inc.)

“Vaginal changes at menopause are not the only thing that can cause uncomfortable intercourse,” said **Margery Gass, executive director of The North American Menopause Society.** “**GSM** captures the concept that it’s not just the vagina but also the lower urinary tract that can be involved,” Gass said. “[The word] syndrome conveys the idea that there are multiple symptoms, and not everyone has the same ones.” Furthermore, “**GSM** is something that can be said more easily in public than vagina and penis.”

Menopause in the News

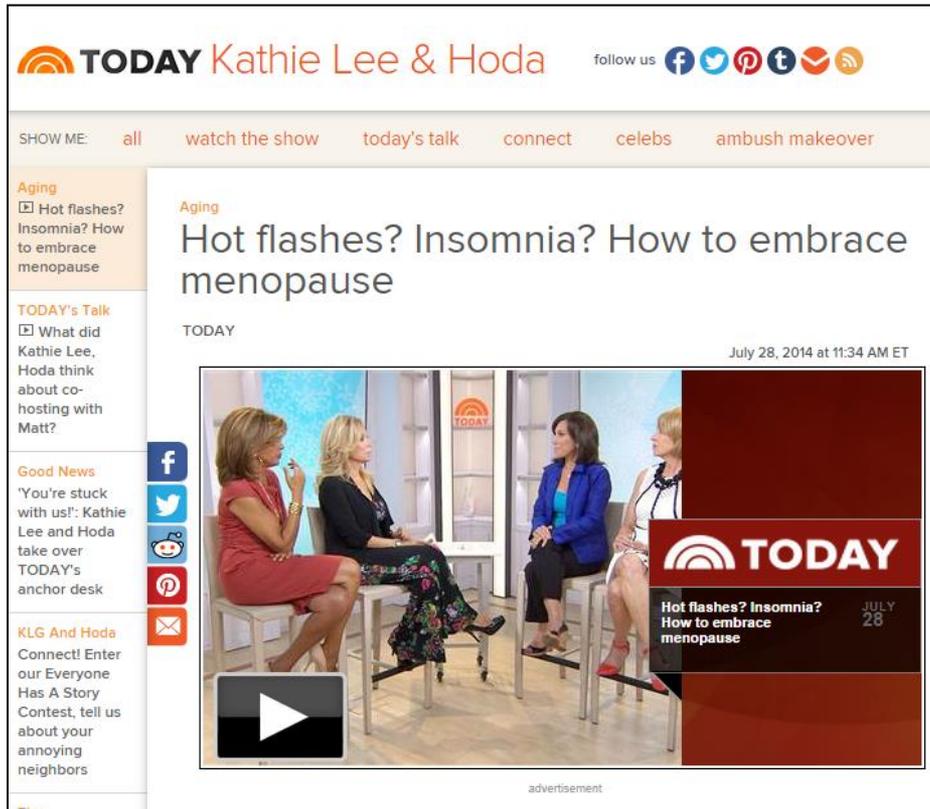


The screenshot shows the WebMD website interface. At the top left is the WebMD logo. To its right is a search bar with a magnifying glass icon. Below the search bar are links for 'Symptoms', 'Doctors', and 'Health Care Reform'. A navigation bar contains 'HEALTH A-Z', 'DRUGS & SUPPLEMENTS', 'LIVING HEALTHY', and 'FAMILY & PREGNANT'. Below this is a breadcrumb trail: 'WebMD Home > Menopause Health Center > Menopause News'. On the left side, there is a vertical menu with links for 'Menopause Health Home', 'News', 'Reference', 'Slideshows', 'Videos', 'Community', 'Find a Gynecologist', 'Menopause Guide', 'Perimenopause', 'MenopauseDaily Living', 'Treatments', 'Postmenopause', and 'Resources'. The main content area is titled 'Menopause Health Center' and features a 'Tools & Resources' section with links: 'Sleep Loss: 10 Things to Hate', 'How to Protect Your Hearing', 'What Causes Yeast Infections?', 'Natural Remedies for Dry Mouth', 'How Vision Changes as You Age', and 'Brain Foods for Better Focus'. Below this is a 'Listen' icon and the article title 'Early Menopause Linked to Heart Failure Risk'. The article snippet begins with 'Association was even stronger among'.

WebMD[®]

Menopause, early or late, is always a good time to take more steps to reduce heart disease risk through exercise, a healthy diet, weight loss, and quitting smoking,” **Dr. Margery Gass, NAMS executive director**, said. “This thought-provoking study should encourage more research to find out how early menopause and heart failure are linked.”

Menopause in the News



The screenshot shows a webpage from TODAY's Kathie Lee & Hoda show. The main article is titled "Hot flashes? Insomnia? How to embrace menopause" and is categorized under "Aging". It features a video player with a play button and a thumbnail image of four women sitting on a set. The video title is "Hot flashes? Insomnia? How to embrace menopause" and it is dated "JULY 28". The webpage also includes a sidebar with "Aging" and "Good News" sections, and social media sharing icons for Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest.



"I wish I could say that every doctor is a menopause expert, but they're not. And while your doctor may be, you still need to get good information. My favorite place to send women is **The North American Menopause Society, menopause.org.**"

—Dr. Lauren Streicher

Menopause in the News



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Time Spent With Grandkids Might Boost Women's Brain Power

HealthDay | April 11, 2014 | 9:00 a.m. EDT

HealthDay

By Robert Preidt, *HealthDay Reporter*

FRIDAY, April 11, 2014 (HealthDay News) -- Spending a little time each week caring for grandkids may help older women stay mentally sharp, a new study finds.



“Because grandmothering is such an important and common social role for postmenopausal women, we need to know more about its effects on their future health. This study is a good start,” **Dr. Margery Gass, executive director of The North American Menopause Society,** said.

Menopause in the News



Changes in your period are the most common sign of perimenopause,” says Margery Gass, MD, the executive director of The North American Menopause Society.

Source: *Menopause*

of warmth during perimenopause. Some get several a day, others just a few per week. They typically spread through the upper body and face, lasting just a few minutes, but long enough to leave you sweaty and blotchy. Hot flashes and their after-dark version, night sweats, usually continue for three to five years and can occur if you wake or are overtired.

Find relief Dressing in layers; avoiding common triggers like spicy foods and caffeinated drinks; and wearing light, breathable fabrics may be enough to manage mild symptoms, says Gass. Research from the Mayo Clinic suggests that rhythmic breathing may reduce the frequency of hot flashes. To spray take six slow, deep breaths every minute for 15 minutes twice daily. A few supplements, such as black cohosh, soy, or evening primrose oil, have become popular for treating hot flashes, but there's no good science to back them up, and some may come with harmful side effects. Research on exercise and hot flashes has been inconclusive, but a recent study found that women who were more fit to begin with had fewer hot flashes if they worked out regularly than those who were out of shape.

For severe hot flashes and night sweats, H1 is the most effective option. It's available in a pill, patch, gel, or spray but comes with some pretty serious caveats: Long-term use of certain HT formulations has been associated with an increased risk of cancer, heart disease, stroke, and blood clots, so people with a history of any of these conditions should avoid it entirely. Women who are candidates are usually prescribed the lowest dose for the shortest amount of time necessary, usually three to five years, to relieve symptoms. If hormones aren't right for you, your doctor can prescribe certain medications off-label that research shows may provide some relief, such as drugs used to treat epilepsy, high blood pressure, or depression. Brisdelle, the first non-hormone drug approved for the treatment of severe hot flashes (it contains the same

as estrogen, but it's not a hormone), the side effects aren't as severe. But it's not as effective as hormone therapy, and it's not as well-studied. Based on the latest research, it's not clear if it's worth trying. Talk to your doctor about the risks and benefits. If you're considering it, make sure you're taking the lowest dose for the shortest amount of time possible. And if you're taking it, make sure you're also taking a low-dose aspirin to help reduce your risk of blood clots.

What's the deal with mood swings? It's not just you. Research shows that 80% of women who experience hot flashes during perimenopause also experience mood swings. This is because the same hormonal changes that cause hot flashes also affect the brain, leading to mood swings. Research shows that 80% of women who experience hot flashes during perimenopause also experience mood swings. This is because the same hormonal changes that cause hot flashes also affect the brain, leading to mood swings.



Roughly 60 percent of women who suffer from these throbbing headaches get them in conjunction with their menstrual cycle or during ovulation. If you're one of them, you're likely to experience more migraines than usual in the coming years, as fluctuating estrogen levels trigger more frequent and severe attacks, explains Gass.

Dressing in layers; avoiding common triggers like spicy foods and caffeinated drinks; and wearing light, breathable fabrics may be enough to manage mild symptoms, says Gass.

For some, these mood changes may be more than just a bout of the blues: “It seems that women are more vulnerable to depression at this time, particularly those who have experienced the disorder in the past,” Gass says.