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Obesity Can Lead to More Severe Hot Flashes and Other Menopause Symptoms

Study confirms that a higher body mass index is related to a higher prevalence of certain menopause symptoms

CLEVELAND, Ohio (May 31, 2017)—Vasomotor symptoms (VMS), such as hot flashes and night sweats, cause serious discomfort in many women at menopause. Studies show a higher frequency of VMS in women who gain weight during the postmenopause period, and the effect of obesity on VMS has been studied for many years. A new study finds that hot flashes are associated with a higher body mass index (BMI). The details were published online today in *Menopause*, the journal of The North American Menopause Society (NAMS).

The study of 749 Brazilian women aged 45 to 60 years showed that obese women suffered more severe consequences of hot flashes, which then caused them to stop certain activities and also decreased their work efficiency. The data support the so-called thermoregulatory theory, which proposes that BMI is positively associated with VMS because body-fat tissue acts as a strong heat insulator. The insulation makes the distribution of heat more difficult, which then causes obese women to suffer more hot flashes. The associations between an increased BMI and other symptoms, such as joint and muscular pain and more intense urinary problems, were also confirmed.

The article, “Does obesity increase the risk of hot flashes among midlife women? A population-based study,” reports on the correlation between menopause symptoms and obesity, and the presented data justify the association between a high BMI and hot flashes. These findings reinforce the importance of a multifaceted approach toward weight control in women going through menopause. Furthermore, the results emphasize the need to create healthcare strategies to minimize the effect of obesity on health issues in menopausal women.

“This study supports earlier studies that found that women who are heavier tend to have more hot flashes, particularly close to menopause,” says Dr. JoAnn Pinkerton, NAMS executive director. “In some studies, but not all, weight loss and exercise have both been shown to reduce hot flashes in women who are obese, thus giving women even more reason to create a healthier lifestyle for themselves.”

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Founded in 1989, The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) is North America’s leading nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the health and quality of life of all women during midlife and beyond through

an understanding of menopause and healthy aging. Its multidisciplinary membership of 2,000 leaders in the field—including clinical and basic science experts from medicine, nursing, sociology, psychology, nutrition, anthropology, epidemiology, pharmacy, and education—makes NAMS uniquely qualified to serve as the definitive resource for health professionals and the public for accurate, unbiased information about menopause and healthy aging. To learn more about NAMS, visit www.menopause.org.