

Ifeoma Ikenze

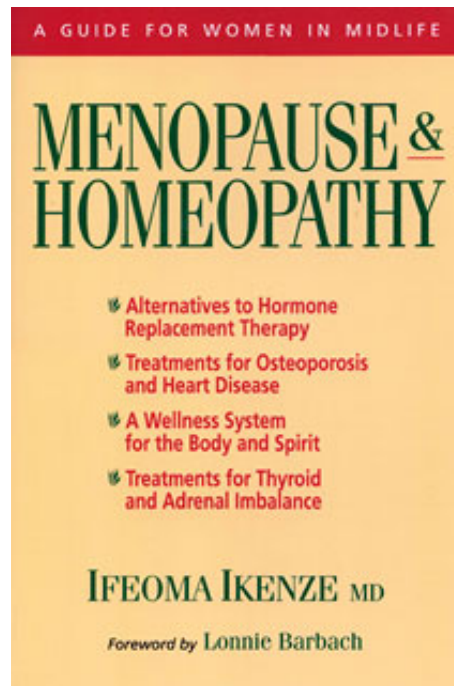
Menopause and Homeopathy

Reading excerpt

[Menopause and Homeopathy](#)

of [Ifeoma Ikenze](#)

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Introduction

I was sitting in a conference in a well-air-conditioned room when I suddenly felt as if a furnace had been lit under my chair. Beads of sweat appeared on my forehead and ran down my neck. I felt an irresistible urge to loosen my collar and dab my forehead. A few minutes later I was cold and buttoning up my collar again. The same thing happened at lunch and again on the drive home. Over the next several days the heat wave would appear as often as ten times a day. I suddenly remembered that my menstrual period was overdue by about three weeks. Could this be the big M word that every woman anticipates, some with trepidation? I was forty-six years old. Somehow I had imagined that I would magically not encounter menopause until the age of fifty and now here I was taken by surprise.

I felt a need to withdraw to contemplate this milestone. What would it mean for me? For twelve years as a medical doctor and as a homeopath I had treated numerous women in menopause and now here / was menopausal. I looked in the mirror and saw not a single wrinkle and not a single gray hair. But I knew that with the onset of hot flashes and the cessation of menstruation would come the beginning of the road to maturity and ultimately aging. How would I go about it? Facing the reality of menopause and the physical aging that follows, I would have to put my money where my mouth is and do exactly what I always tell my patients to do: age naturally, gracefully, and with radiant health.

In spite of the explosion of information about menopause, hormones, osteoporosis, and so on, I am seeing more women than

ever in my office with complaints about menopause. While there are numerous orthodox and alternative therapies for treating the physical imbalances associated with menopause, very little is known about how to redress the often associated psychological, emotional, and mental imbalances. Orthodox medicine has nothing to offer other than palliatives in the form of antidepressants, tranquilizers, or stimulants. So for many, this period of transition becomes a period of crisis — a midlife crisis.

Until about thirty years ago there was very little information available to the average woman about this period that will ultimately have such a decisive impact upon every aspect of her life. Historically women have received little attention from the medical establishment and the media except to be categorized as sex objects or mothers. In a society that was male oriented for centuries, women were considered a different breed. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century a woman did not even undress to be examined by her physician. Because there were few female physicians, the woman's body was considered uncharted territory to which the medical establishment gave only the most superficial attention. Until recently, most of the research in medicine has been oriented toward diseases with a male predilection such as heart disease, hypertension, peptic ulcers, prostate cancer, and colon cancer. Of course, until recently the issue of menopause was hardly of any significance because the average life span of women in Europe and America rarely exceeded the fourth decade until the beginning of the twentieth century. Only with improved nutrition and hygiene, especially in regard to childbirth, and relief from the drudgery of the past by the advent of modern machinery did European women begin to live well into their sixties, seventies, and eighties. With this increased life span, there began to appear reports of neurotic behavior in middle-aged women, especially of the middle class. In describing the neurotic behavior of the middle- and upper-middle-class women of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Vienna, Sigmund Freud attributed it to the feebleness of the female mind. Today, we can safely say that those

women were actually suffering from classic menopausal symptoms. Today, women are not only living longer but are also entering into positions of leadership and influence where it becomes important to maintain their health, longevity, and productivity within society. Therefore, society has now begun to concern itself with women's health, such as issues of menopause and female aging.

If menopause is a purely natural process, why is there so much physical and emotional distress associated with it? Today, the menopausal woman is led to believe that she must be under the treatment of a physician for a process that we call "natural." She must take a drug — whether it is a hormone, an antidepressant, or a pain medicine — everyday for that "natural" process. She is convinced that without these drugs her life of productivity, sexuality, and emotional stability is at an end. No wonder many women approach this period with trepidation. As far as the medical establishment is concerned, menopause is a pathological state. Therefore, the menopausal woman must be "treated" to prevent aging, osteoporosis, loss of sexuality, heart disease, depression, and so on, and as part of this treatment program she must undergo blood tests, x rays, endoscopies, stress tests, and pap smears all in search of that pathology that looms at every turn. This litany of tests and drugs that is now considered preventive medicine is in reality far from preventive. At best, it can be described as a search and destroy approach: search for disease and "destroy" it before it destroys you.

Judging from the size of my practice, I can safely say that I am not the only one who sees something seriously wrong with this picture. If menopause is a normal and natural process, then there must be a natural way to experience the cessation of menstruation and the associated psychic, emotional, and physical transitions that it must bring — *without pathology!* It is unfortunate that in our culture we tend to consider optimal health of body, mind, and psyche to be an elusive myth, and we equate the absence of pain with good health. Yet millions of dollars are spent

by women seeking to exercise their freedom of choice in search of therapies aimed at restoring that sense of balance and wholeness inherent to good health that modern medicine, in spite of its trappings of grandeur, has been unable to deliver. But it appears that the average woman's exercise of freedom of choice is driven by, and at the same time limited by, irrational fears imposed upon her by the medical and pharmaceutical establishments: fear of disease, of aging, of material and emotional loss, and of loneliness.

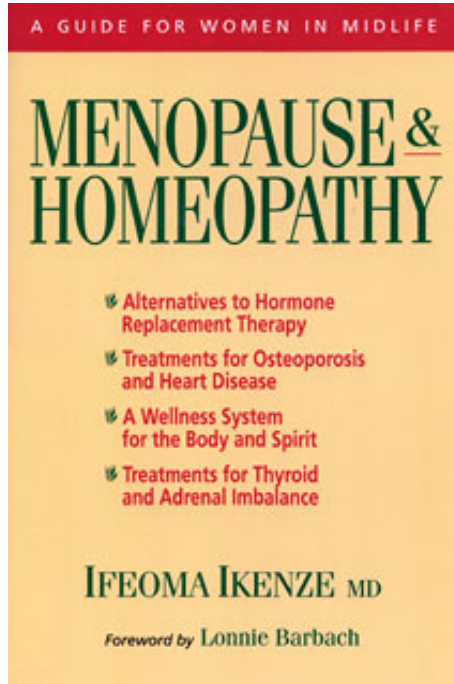
You...entirely deserted the path indicated by nature and built up an artificial system which is fit for nothing but to...prey upon the pockets of the sick.

— Paracelsus, *The Life and Doctrines of Paracelsus*

In the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, the word *natural* is defined, among other things, as *established by nature, existing in or by nature, innate, inherent, not artificial*. And the word *normal* is defined as *free from mental and emotional disorder*. As a homeopathic physician with twelve years of practice and a woman in menopause, I believe that it is possible to experience a natural menopause and healthy aging without heart disease, osteoporosis, depression, and other disruptive disorders, and *without the use of drugs and other artificial agents*. To achieve this will involve a complete change in our attitude toward our bodies and ourselves. In embracing this transition a woman must begin to know herself, to listen to that which she carries innately, and to recognize where emotional or physical imbalances occur. With this book, I intend to lead you down a road of self-discovery and self-empowerment, toward the conviction that you can experience a natural menopause free from mental and emotional disorder.

Women often ask me how I can keep up with everything I do without tiring. I am a physician and a mother. Besides my full-time medical practice, I travel across the United States and Canada giving workshops and lectures on homeopathy and women's issues and I manage to find the time to write. Where does the ener-

gy come from to do all this? The energy comes from within! Women must become conscious that they have access to more strength and help than they realize. This strength or energy is intimately connected with that deeper intangible part of every woman, the part that homeopathy speaks to, supports, and enhances. The intangible part that makes a woman is not her physical body — her female sexual organs or the female hormones they produce — but something far more stupendous, something that sets her apart from man and makes her the pillar around which everything revolves, both in the home and outside the home, and makes her a living reflection of everything around her. That intangible part of her is her spiritual womanhood, which is every woman's birthright. This birthright has no connection with religion but rather connects the inner being of every woman to the very Source of Life. From there she can draw strength if she consciously seeks it, be it by prayer, meditation or deep soul searching, so long as it is a true and honest seeking.



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A Guide for Women in Midlife

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