Defeating the Energy Crisis of Menopause Transcript

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Introduction to Menopause Energy

Hi there. I'm Laura Frontiero. I'm your co-host for the Menopause Summit. Now, a lot of the conversations this week focus on hormones and hormones absolutely are so important.

And there's another piece I want to make sure you don't miss. Your tiny energy producers called mitochondria and exactly how to keep them running. Here's a closer look at how that fits into feeling like yourself again during menopause.

In today's bite size mini talk, I'm focusing on your energy, which is one of the most common concerns that I hear from my menopausal women. I'm constantly ask things like, where did my energy go?

So if you've experienced this, you're definitely not alone. And on this summit, we're covering many different reasons that women and menopause can feel just tired out.

And in this talk, I want to focus on one very important piece of our energy puzzle. So picture yourself. Maybe you wake up tired, even though maybe you got a whole good night's sleep, or you hit a wall 2:00 in the afternoon, 3:00 you've been going all day cruising and then a blam!

You hit a wall. Or maybe, you know, when you work out, it just doesn't feel as good as it used to. It's harder for you to recover. It's harder for you to build muscle.

It's harder for you to get energy from a workout.

Why Menopause Fatigue Happens

And for you, you know, maybe it's something different entirely, like your brain isn't feeling as sharp or you just overall feel like after a long day it takes you more time to recover.

So an increase in need for recovery. And I'm sure that, you know, you're feeling like, gosh, I'm doing so many things right, but my body's not responding the way it used to.

It's actually responding completely differently. And naturally, I think I think we naturally go to hormones here. We think, oh, this must be my hormones.

And that's because, in truth, our estrogen, our progesterone, our testosterone, they're dropping. And cortisol can even become more disruptive at this time in our life.

And hormones are so important. They absolutely matter and you should get them addressed. And I also want to show you another part of the story today, because your hormones don't work all by themselves.

And one of the things that I teach is that symptoms are signals. Low energy or fatigue is no different. It's really just a signal from your body that something's going on.

Something's happening. So instead of simply asking, how do I get more energy, I want you to start asking a different question. So start thinking of why isn't my body producing and managing energy as efficiently as it used to?

And to answer that, we need to talk about your mitochondria. So I'm going to simplify this for you. You actually have two kinds of energy. I like to explain it in two ways.

First, there's the physical energy that you feel. That's the energy that gets you out of bed, that gets you through your workout, that helps you think clearly, that helps you take care of your family and run a business or, you know, manage other people or be able to socialize like a normal, functioning human and enjoy your life and travel and that kind of energy.

But underneath all the things that we kind of notice and that we're aware of is the energy that I like to call your your invisible energy, that's your cellular energy.

You may have heard of. It referred to a cellular energy. I like to say it's invisible because it's kind of running in the background. And we don't we're not aware that it's happening.

And every cell in your body needs energy to function. So give you some examples here. Your heart, when it's beating it needs energy to do that. The thinking just processing this talk right now while you're listening to me, your brain needs an enormous amount of energy to think your muscles when you're moving about your day, your muscles need to contract.

Mitochondria and Cellular Energy

When you eat your meals, your digestive system needs to break down and absorb the food, and your liver needs to process the compounds, and your immune system needs to respond.

And so even making metabolizing hormones, for example, requires energy, that cellular energy, that invisible energy, and much of that cellular energy is produced by those tiny little structures inside the cells called mitochondria.

So think of them like little energy factories. And when those factories are working efficiently, your cells can do their job. They're better equipped to do their job.

And when they're struggling, you may feel that on the outside, you may feel it as fatigue or brain fog, or the poor exercise tolerance or slower recovery, and simply kind of that feeling of I don't have the kind of energy I used to have.

And here's where menopause feels different than before you were in menopause or before perimenopause. Estrogen doesn't just affect your reproductive system.

Estragon interacts with your brain and your muscles and your insulin signaling and your cardiovascular system and those mitochondria. So as estrogen changes through perimenopause and menopause, the way your body produces and uses energy can change too.

But I don't want you walking away thinking, great, you know, I'm losing my estrogen here. As I go through menopause, my estrogen drops. So now I'm doomed to be tired because that's absolutely not the case.

Because estrogen is only one part of the energy kind of equation. Your mitochondria function is also influenced by a whole bunch of other things like your blood sugar, your muscle mass, your nutrient status, your sleep or lack thereof, stress and cortisol, gut health, toxic burden, all those toxicants that can get in the body, inflammation at the cellular level, whether or not you're moving your body and the overall health of that cellular environment surrounding those mitochondria as well.

And this is why I don't believe the answer to menopausal fatigue is simply to chase, you know, one hormone or take another energy supplement. There's a lot of factors that are important here. Yes.

Get your hormones checked and get those fixed and get hormones on board if it's appropriate for you, because that's going to help significantly. We have to actually look at your internal terrain, and I'm going to suggest something that sounds a little crazy.

Your mitochondria actually needs some stress.

Hormones, Stress, and Mitochondrial Function

they don't necessarily become stronger if you're making life easier for them. So just like when you think a muscle, you use it or lose it. Mitochondria are kind of similar.

Use them or lose them. They actually respond really well to the right kinds of stress in the right amounts. And there's a biological concept called Hermes.

And that simply means that a small little temporary change can stimulate the body to adapt and become more resilient. And the key words that I just said are small and temporary.

We're not talking about chronic stress or sleeping five hours a night, or over exercising, over exercising. I'm talking to you if you're an over exerciser or an underwriter, if that's you, you know who you are or if you just run yourself into the ground, none of those things are.

You can wear like a badge of honor, like giving my mitochondria stress. That's not Hermes. That's actually depletion. And I want you to avoid that entirely.

Now, hormone stress is more like giving your cells a workout. And when you do that appropriately, you can stimulate processes involved in repairing damage mitochondria and creating healthier new ones.

So one of these processes is called mythology, which is essentially cellular housekeeping. So deep cleaning of the cells your cells can identify mitochondria that aren't functioning well and then recycle the damaged components of the mitochondria and cellular activity and get it out of the body.

another one is mitochondrial biogenesis. So just as the word sounds biogenesis genesis meaning life, that is the process of creating new mitochondria.

So how do we encourage your body to do this with temporary and short little stressors. So I'm going to give you some good strategies here. The first one is building muscle.

If you're in menopause muscle is one of the most important longevity assets. And you've probably heard this quite a bit. Now I want to make a distinction between movement and exercise.

Movement is walking. It's gardening. It's stretching. It's taking the stairs. It's staying active throughout your day. We need that. But that's not enough to stimulate mitochondria.

Exercise has a specific purpose and we're challenging the body. So it has a reason to adapt. And particularly during menopause resistance training becomes really, really important.

And when you challenge those muscles you're also challenging the mitochondria.

How to Support Mitochondria Naturally

Exercise stimulates those adaptations that can improve things like mitochondria quantity, how many of them are hanging around and mitochondria function.

And glucose, blood sugar handling and meta being metabolically flexible and strength and resilience. So yes, I want you to walk, but I don't want you to make walking the only thing you do because you want to maintain and build muscle.

Number two is to use heat and cold strategically. Now another form of Hormuz is temperature. Heat exposure. For example, getting in a sauna or just getting out in the hot sun.

If you happen to live in a part of the world where it's nice and hot, like Arizona. So you, create a temporary physiologic stress that stimulates adaptive responses in the body.

And cold can do something similar, which does not mean you need to buy a giant cold plunge and turn your backyard into a biohacking center. It can be as simple on the cold side of things as finishing your shower with some brief, cooler water at the end, if that makes sense for you.

Or something like splashing your face with cold water when you first wake up in the morning. That's actually my favorite. And I do it every single day, no matter where I'm at, at my home, at a hotel, a family's house.

And it's free. And the goal here is never suffering. We don't want you suffering. Instead, the goal is a short, controlled challenge followed by the recovery.

So number three is give yourselves the right light. So I'm talking about red and near infrared light. They have an interaction with mitochondria. It's called photo bio modulation.

Photo bio modulation. And certain wavelengths of light can interact with components of the mitochondria electron transport chain that you maybe remember learning from high school science.

They produce ATP through that electron transport chain. And don't forget the most accessible light therapy of all is the sun. Now, morning light helps anchor your circadian rhythm.

Circadian rhythm, which affects in turn your cortisol, your sleep, your metabolism, and the the actual timing of countless processes throughout your body.

And if you're trying to improve energy while completely ignoring sleep and circadian rhythm, you're actually missing one of the biggest pieces. So make that a priority.

Number four is to stop overfeeding and under nourishing your body. And this one's really important. So menopause is not the time to live on coffee all morning like I did when I was in college.

It's not the time to skip meals like I did when I was in my late 20s early 30s. It's not the time to underwrite protein and then doing all of these things and wondering, why does my body feel stressed all the time?

Your body needs nutrients. Your mitochondria need raw materials. They need amino acids, minerals, B vitamins, essential fatty acids, antioxidants, phytonutrients, and muscles need protein.

So there can also be a place for strategically creating periods of nutrient scarcity to activate cellular cleanup pathways, for sure.

Foundations for Lasting Energy

One of the talks on this summit is all about the fasting mimicking. And so fasting mimicking is a great way for a menopausal woman to clean up cellular pathways.

But there's an enormous difference between a strategically used fasting or fasting mimicking intervention and chronically under fueling yourself. So more fasting is not always better, especially for a stressed and exhausted woman.

So feed your body well first, and then use these tools to support you. So the fifth thing is to just eat the rainbow. I mean, I feel like I was teaching this to my daughter when she was little, and we needed to teach it to adults too.

So plants contain compounds called phytochemicals. Those are phytochemicals or things like sulforaphane from cruciferous vegetables. Those are your broccoli and cauliflower and brussel sprouts, for example, curcumin from turmeric.

That's another catechins from green tea. And there's compounds found in berries and herbs and garlic and onions and all the colorful vegetables and many of these plant compounds.

What they do is they interact with cellular stress response pathways that help your body actually become more resilient. So when I tell you to eat colorful whole foods, it's not simply because vegetables are healthy, but when you eat them, you're actually giving your cells information.

But there's one more piece. so hear me on this. You can do red light, you can do a sauna, you can lift weights and you can eat beautiful food. But if your body is struggling with poor sleep and chronic stress and blood sugar dysregulation and gut dysfunction and toxic burden, you've got to address those foundations too.

So this is where my approach may be different. I don't want you chasing mitochondria health for the sake of it. Instead, I want you creating an environment in which your cells can can actually function the way that they're designed to function.

And that means supporting your gut. It means supporting your body's natural drainage and elimination pathways. It means getting enough protein and nutrients, building the muscle, managing blood sugar, paying attention to that, prioritizing sleep and restorative sleep, and supporting the nervous system.

Nervous system regulation is critical, and then lowering all that toxic exposure and environmental toxicants that you're exposed to day in and day out.

And then you can layer in the tools like sauna and red light and the strategic cornices and the targeted nutritional support. The good news here is that your energy can come back and your energy can get better.

So if you're exhausted during menopause, I don't want you to simply accept that this is what getting older feels like. And I also don't want you to thinking that you need to do everything I just listed here tomorrow.

Instead, start with the foundations. Eat real, nutrient dense food. Make sure you're getting protein at each meal. Work on building that muscle. Get outside every morning.

Look at the sun as it's rising. Look at the sun again. At the end of the day, as it's setting. I'm not saying stare at the sun, but get sun exposure for sure and then, you know, really protect your sleep.

I cannot, I cannot say this enough. I feel like this is one of the things where I sound like a broken record player a lot in my community. When people say, I'm not sleeping, I'm not sleeping.

But are you actually having good sleep hygiene? So absolutely critical. Support your gut and then reduce the unnecessary stress on your system and then begin layering in some of these mitochondrial strategies.

Because the goal isn't just to have enough energy to make it through your day. The goal, I know, is you want to build a body that's strong, that's resilient, that's metabolically healthy, and that's capable of actually carrying you through next several decades of your life.

So menopause is this beautiful transition time. And it can also I guess, think of it like an invitation to understand your body differently and support it differently, and become much more intentional about the healthier building for the future.

So thank you so much for being here. I'm Laura Frontiero and I hope this gives you a completely different way to think about your energy during menopause.

So enjoy the rest of the summit and I'll see you in the next session.