MEDICAL BREAKTHROUGHS
RESEARCH SUMMARY

TOPIC: MENOPAUSE: WEIGHT ON YOUR WAIST HURTS YOUR HEART!
REPORT: MB #4962

BACKGROUND: Menopause does not cause heart disease; however, certain risk factors involving menopause can increase the chances of developing heart disease. A high fat diet, smoking, or other unhealthy habits that can become an issue early on in life can also add to the risk of heart disease. Menopause in and of itself is not a disease, but rather the natural aging process every woman goes through. The onset of menopause is when women’s menstrual periods permanently stop. This can occur around age 54. There is an overall risk for heart disease in women ten years after they are menopausal. Family history can contribute to your risk for heart disease as well. Eliminating unhealthy habits like smoking, which can contribute to early menopause and increase the risk of developing blood clots and maintaining a healthy diet and exercise routine can all decrease a woman’s risk of heart disease after menopause. (Source: https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/consumer-healthcare/what-is-cardiovascular-disease/menopause-and-heart-disease)

DIAGNOSING: During menopause, levels of estrogen drop significantly, causing hot flashes, night sweats, and insomnia. After the age of 50, women are at risk for developing heart disease. A healthy lifestyle can reduce this. Quitting smoking, maintaining a healthy body weight, exercising, eating well, and treating medical conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressure can all reduce the risk of heart disease in menopausal women. When the estrogen in women drops, they can develop high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, atrial fibrillation, and weight gain. Heart disease symptoms include palpitations, shortness of breath, pressure in the chest, headaches, lightheadedness or dizziness, jaw ache, swelling of the feet, and difficulty lying flat. While menopausal symptoms are normal, experiencing anything heart related should be discussed with a doctor since there is a higher risk of developing heart disease. (Sources: https://www.webmd.com/menopause/guide/menopause-heart-disease, https://www.everydayhealth.com/atrial-fibrillation/symptoms/eight-signs-of-heart-changes-during-menopause/)

NEW RESEARCH: Studies are still being done to see if hormone therapy can reduce the risk of heart disease in menopausal women. At the present time, the study shows it should not be used as the primary or secondary tactic in reducing heart disease in women. However, there is recent evidence suggesting that women in early menopause with good cardiovascular health and who are low risk of developing heart disease could be considered for hormone therapy as a treatment to prevent heart disease. If a woman is older than 65, hormone therapy is not recommended. (Source: https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/committee-opinion/articles/2013/06/hormone-therapy-and-heart-disease)

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If this story or any other Ivanhoe story has impacted your life or prompted you or someone you know to seek or change treatments, please let us know by contacting Marjorie Bekaert Thomas at mthomas@ivanhoe.com