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**The
Menopause
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Leading the Conversation

Contact:

The Menopause Society

Ella Adams (eadams@fallsandco.com)

Phone: (216) 696-0229

Women Entering Menopause Later in Life at Greater Risk for Asthma

New study suggests role of natural and synthetic estrogen in increasing risk of asthma

CLEVELAND, Ohio (Oct. 30, 2024)—Many studies suggest that an *earlier* age at menopause is more detrimental to a woman’s health, leading to an increased risk for adverse health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, and depression, among others. However, a new study is linking a *later* age at natural menopause with a greater risk for asthma. Results of the study are published online today in *Menopause*, the journal of The Menopause Society.

Asthma is a common, chronic disease affecting more than 300 million people worldwide. The prevalence of asthma has been increasing over recent years, creating a substantial economic impact because it is one of the highest diseases for healthcare use. Adult-onset asthma is typically more severe and more difficult to treat than childhood asthma.

Multiple studies have suggested a possible link between asthma and sex hormones. Most notable is the fact that adult-onset asthma is more common in women than men. In childhood, asthma is more prevalent in boys. After puberty, however, asthma occurs more often in girls. Women also tend to have more severe asthma and are less likely to have remission of the disease.

Some studies have found a peak incidence of asthma at around age 40 years, which is commonly the age of the menopause transition, whereas other studies found a peak at the average age at menopause, which is 51 years. Both natural estrogen and synthetic estrogen, such as used in hormone therapy, offer similar risk profiles. Women using hormone therapy were shown to have a 63% increased risk of asthma, whereas women who stopped hormone therapy were two times more likely to quit asthma treatment. Higher body mass index also is shown to be a risk factor for women, but not men, because fat produces estrogen.

Unfortunately, research on the association between menopause and asthma incidence is limited and has yielded conflicting results. That is why this newest study, based on 10 years of follow-up data from more than 14,000 postmenopausal women, was designed to investigate the association between the age at natural menopause and incidence of asthma in nonsmoking postmenopausal women. The study researchers found that women with early menopause (which occurs between 40 and 44 years of age) are at a reduced risk of asthma, which led them to suggest a role of estrogen with asthma risk.

Study results are published in the article “The association between age at natural menopause and risk of asthma among postmenopausal women from the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging.”

“This study highlights sex-based differences in asthma, with women at a greater risk for asthma than men in adulthood. It also showed that women with later onset of menopause are at greater risk than those with early onset of menopause. Clinicians should be aware of this link and should monitor women with later

age at natural menopause for asthma symptoms,” says Dr. Stephanie Faubion, medical director for The Menopause Society.

For more information about menopause and healthy aging, visit www.menopause.org.

The Menopause Society (formerly The North American Menopause Society) is dedicated to empowering healthcare professionals and providing them with the tools and resources to improve the health of women during the menopause transition and beyond. As the leading authority on menopause since 1989, the nonprofit, multidisciplinary organization serves as the independent, evidence-based resource for healthcare professionals, researchers, the media, and the public and leads the conversation about improving women’s health and healthcare experiences. To learn more, visit menopause.org.