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**Contact:**

The Menopause Society

Ella Adams (eadams@fallsandco.com)

Phone: (216) 696-0229

### **Exploring the Possible Link Between PTSD and Early Menopause**

*A new study shows that women veterans with probable PTSD have almost two-fold odds of early menopause and related health consequences*

CLEVELAND, Ohio (Sept 10, 2024) – Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can cause an array of adverse mental health effects, but physical side effects are also common. A new study conducted with Persian Gulf War female military personnel demonstrates that women with probable PTSD are twice as likely to experience early menopause and related health consequences. Results of the study will be presented at the 2024 Annual Meeting of The Menopause Society in Chicago September 10-14.

Commonly reported symptoms of PTSD include anger outbursts, anxiety, and difficulty concentrating and sleeping. Physically, PTSD can also be responsible for serious headaches and body aches. The unique psychological and environmental stressors from serving in the Gulf War have been shown to create a type of PTSD experience. Most notably are military sexual trauma, sexual assault, and/or sexual harassment during military service.

Gulf War deployment has been singled out because of its link to health difficulties not found in non-deployed veterans of the same era. These include Gulf War Illness which is characterized by joint pain, gastrointestinal issues, headaches, rashes, and mood symptoms speculated to be the result of environmental exposures to burn pits and oil fires.

In the new study involving more than 2,000 Gulf War deployed and Gulf War-era women veterans, researchers sought to address gaps in understanding the relationship between military exposures and early menopause and evaluate the type of impact these stressors could have on a woman's menopause symptom burden and, more specifically, confirm if they could underlie premature ovarian aging.

Early menopause, which is described as menopause prior to age 45, is of concern because of its link with a number of negative health consequences, such as fertility loss, premature mortality, cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, sexual dysfunction, and depression. After adjusted analyses, probable PTSD was shown to be associated with early menopause. In fact, women veterans with probable PTSD at baseline had almost two-fold odds of early menopause. There were no significant associations between Gulf War deployment, Gulf War exposures, Gulf War illness, or military sexual trauma and early menopause.

“This work adds to the growing body of literature implicating PTSD in adverse menopause and reproductive health outcomes across the lifespan,” says Caitlin Elizabeth Haas, lead researcher from the San Francisco VA Health Care System. “One possible explanation is that PTSD is indicative not just of trauma but of symptom burden, possibly prolonging the biological sequelae associated with the stressful event.”

More detailed results will be discussed at the 2024 Annual Meeting of The Menopause Society as part of the presentation entitled “Military Exposures and Early Menopause: Findings from the Gulf War Cohort Study.”

“This study, among other things, highlights the need for healthcare professionals to thoroughly review their patients’ histories and be aware of any external stressors that could impact their menopause experience and related symptoms,” says Dr. Stephanie Faubion, medical director for The Menopause Society.

Both Caitlin Haas and Dr. Faubion are available for interviews prior to the Annual Meeting.

For more information about menopause and healthy aging, visit the newly redesigned [www.menopause.org](http://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](http://menopause.org).