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**The
Menopause
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Leading the Conversation

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Infertility May Lead to More Severe Menopause Symptoms

New study suggests that women with prior infertility are more likely to experience depressive mood, irritability, and sleep problems during the menopause transition

CLEVELAND, Ohio (August 2, 2023)—Not all women experience menopause the same way. The severity of menopause symptoms is influenced by a multitude of behavioral, biological, social, psychological, and demographic factors. A new study suggests that infertility may also be a risk factor for some menopause symptoms, including depressive mood, irritability, and sleep problems. Results of the study are published online today in *Menopause*, the journal of The Menopause Society.

A woman's reproductive history has been implicated as a factor in the timing of menopause onset and the prevalence of menopause symptoms. Although the literature on the relation of infertility with the onset of menopause or the severity of menopause symptoms is scarce, there is some indication that women with a history of infertility may experience earlier menopause and greater severity of some menopause symptoms. In addition, infertility has been found to be an equivalent life stressor to a cancer diagnosis, and experiencing stressful life events is associated with reports of more menopause symptoms.

The goal of this new study involving nearly 700 midlife women was to specifically evaluate the effect of a lifetime history of infertility on the experience of menopause symptoms in midlife. Of the study participants, roughly one-third (36.6%) reported ever experiencing infertility. This is higher than the national average of infertility overall that, according to at least one study (The Nurses' Health Study), was estimated at 27.6%.

Based on the findings, researchers in this new study concluded that women with a history of infertility had greater odds of experiencing sleep problems, depressive mood, and irritability. No association was documented between infertility and other common menopause symptoms such as hot flashes, vaginal dryness, or anxiety.

This is not the first time that infertility has been associated with depression. Prior studies have shown that 30% to 60% of women undergoing evaluation and treatment of infertility screen positive for depression. This is the first study, however, to show that a prior history of infertility is associated with depressive symptoms in midlife and could be considered a flag for increased screening for depressive symptoms in midlife.

Study results are published in the article "Exploring the relationship between history of infertility and the experience of menopausal symptoms."

"This study shows an association between a history of infertility and increased odds of depression and sleep symptoms in midlife. Women in midlife with a history of infertility may benefit from increased screening for depression," 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.