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Q5(d)

Menopausal symptoms

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · Anthropology GS 1 · 10 marks · Relevance of menarche, menopause and other bioevents to fertility. Fertility patterns and differentials.

11.1 Relevance of menarche, menopause and other bioevents to fertility. Fertility patterns and differentials.

Core demand of the question

- Write a note on menopausal symptoms
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length of about 150 words

Revision summary

Menopause ends cycles after follicular exhaustion.

Core symptoms are flushes, night sweats, urogenital atrophy, and bone loss.

Mood and sleep complaints are common in clinics.

Lock showed that Japanese aging did not copy American flush medicine.

Symptoms are biology read through culture and the older woman's social place.

Introduction

Menopause is the permanent end of menstruation after ovarian follicles are exhausted. Symptoms are biological, but culture decides which of them count as an illness.

Body**Common symptoms**

- **Vasomotor symptoms** include hot flushes and night sweats, tied to oestrogen decline and thermoregulatory change.
- Urogenital change, vaginal dryness, and urinary complaints follow mucosal atrophy.
- Bone loss raises **osteoporosis risk**, and sleep, mood, and sexual difficulty are often reported in clinics.
- Timing is commonly around 45-55 years, with earlier menopause after some surgeries or in some undernourished populations.

Biocultural reading

- **Margaret Lock** in Encounters with Aging showed that Japanese konenki did not match North American hot-flush medicine, so symptom lists are not a universal script.
- Indian mid-life ethnography likewise finds joint pain, weakness, and social role change beside, or instead of, flush talk.
- Hormone therapy, calcium, and exercise are biomedical answers; anthropology adds household status of the older woman, as **Nancy Scheper-Hughes** and medical anthropology would insist for any embodied change.

Flow diagram

Oestrogen decline -> Vasomotor
Oestrogen decline -> Bone urogenital
Culture -> Which symptoms are illness

Conclusion

Menopausal symptoms include flushes, urogenital change, bone loss, and mood or sleep disturbance. Their meaning and intensity are biocultural, as Lock's Japan comparison still teaches.

Facts & figures

Vasomotor symptoms

Hot flushes and night sweats associated with changing oestrogen and thermoregulation.

Osteoporosis risk

Post-menopausal bone loss that raises fracture risk and is a biomedical focus of the same transition.

Margaret Lock

Encounters with Aging compared Japanese konenki with North American medical menopause.

Age range

Natural menopause commonly occurs in the middle of the fifth decade of life, with wide individual and population variation.