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This guide is an educational service provided by:  
Positively Thriving: Functional Wellness for Women



Welcome! This is Lyssa Jaye.

Thank you for downloading 'Five Toxic Beliefs Preventing You from Thriving During Your 40s and Beyond'. We at Positively Thriving: Functional Wellness for Women created this guide because we know perimenopause can be a time of fabulous health, growth, strength, and optimism—despite the very real physical challenges and misconceptions about this time of life.

This guide will help you understand some of the changes that happen to your body during perimenopause as well as the many ways you can attain, maintain or regain optimal health so you can feel great in your body and set yourself up for a long, healthy, and happy life.

The information and suggestions we provide in this guide are based on solid science and years of medical practice and research. Best of all, they're easy to start implementing right away!

Our practice is dedicated to working with women to find the root causes of their unique hormonal and health issues and helping them achieve optimal wellness. We are honored to be part of your path to feeling your best during perimenopause and beyond.

In health,  
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# Is This Woman You? (if so, you are definitely not alone.)

Our culture does a fantastic job of obsessing over youth, careers, and motherhood. And in recent years, there's even been an increased interest in the needs of our seniors (thanks, Boomers!). But in between, there's a yawning information chasm. It's the empty space that should be filled with articles, talk shows, and conversations amongst friends and with healthcare providers about a momentous, transformative phase of life: perimenopause.

Have you experienced (and been frustrated by!) some of these common symptoms of perimenopause?

- Hot flashes and night sweats (also known as vasomotor symptoms)
- Insomnia (either having trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep)
- Vaginal dryness ("drygina," if you like)
- Increased irritability, depression, or anxiety
- Weight gain or inability to lose weight
- Fatigue
- Loss of energy (harder to kick-start in the morning, easier to crash during the day)
- Incontinence (pee leaks—maybe when you laugh or cough, or maybe as a dreadful surprise anytime in the day)
- Periods that are irregular, heavy, crampy, or just ... weird
- Libido crash (or, conversely, sudden libido increase)
- Hair loss
- Headaches
- Dry eyes, mouth, or skin—maybe with some tingling, burning, or itching
- Joint or muscle pain or stiffness
- Droopy skin
- Changes in digestion (maybe an increase in heartburn or constipation, or maybe just sudden trouble with foods that never caused problems before)
- Changes of body composition—less muscle or more fat in new places

**All of these challenges—whether you are just starting to notice them or feel like you are in the eye of a hormonal storm—can be managed by looking at ALL of the underlying causes and working from the roots up with an experienced functional healthcare provider.**



# Maybe you have also noticed that you are now...



Less concerned about what others think about you

Embracing your wisdom based on years of experience and triumphs over difficulties

Enjoying or looking forward to no more periods

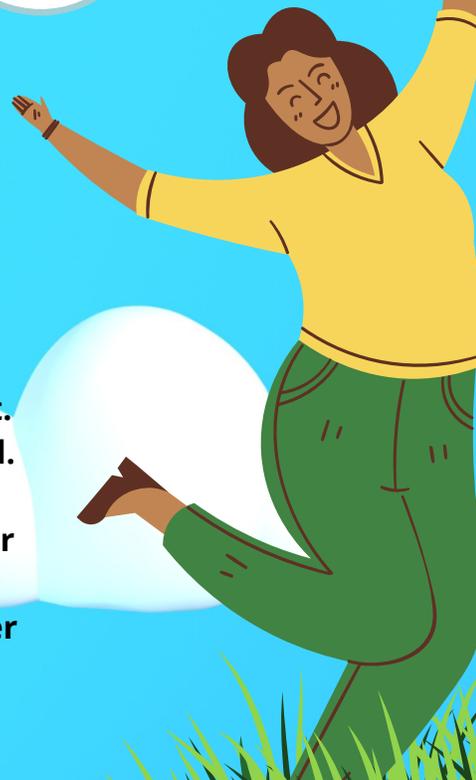
Exhibiting increased empathy

Understanding—intellectually, experientially and emotionally—that you have the power to create positive change in your life, especially your physical and emotional health (and that you may need some help focusing that power)

Better able to make big decisions with confidence

Appreciating your well-earned self-understanding, self-confidence and self-acceptance

Reveling in your long-term friendships and better able to navigate and lean on your support networks



**Put it this way: We've all been conditioned to forever yearn for youth and dread and fear the idea of aging. Well, excuse our French, but screw that. This isn't a time to vanish into that void. It's time to harness all of that hard-earned knowledge and wisdom to get or stay healthy, strong, and happy. Don't wish you could go back and do it all over again, knowing what you know now. Use what you know now to create an amazing life now, and for your future.**

# FIVE TOXIC BELIEFS

## PREVENTING YOU FROM LIVING YOUR BEST LIFE

1. Estrogen is the fountain of youth, and in its absence, you're falling apart.
2. I can always sleep later.
3. It is time to retire my vagina.
4. This is my new, bigger (or uncomfortable) body and I'm stuck with it.
5. I've peaked. It's all downhill from here.

# Toxic Belief #1: Estrogen is the fountain of youth, and in its absence, you're falling apart.

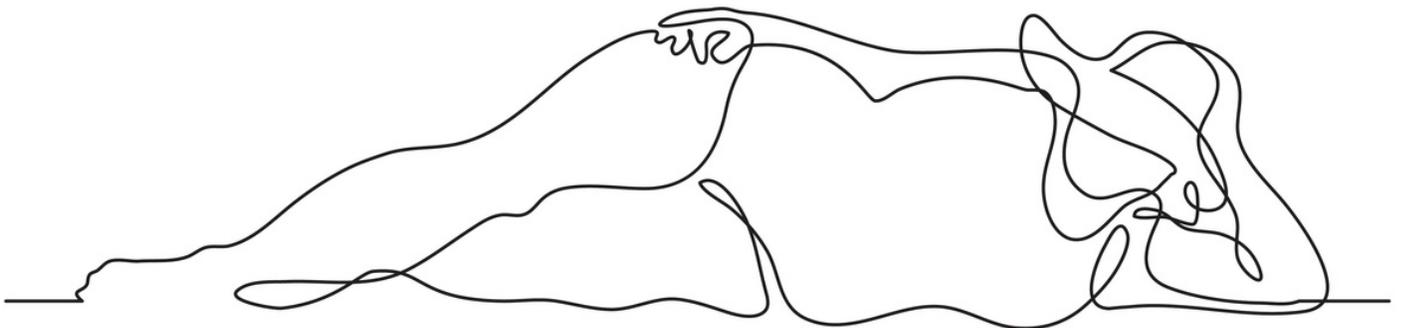
Whatever your hormones have been doing, you've probably learned to predict and manage their ebbs and flows, floating along with their familiar patterns. Then comes perimenopause, and it's like you went over Niagara Falls in a barrel. Yes, estrogen depletion towards the end of perimenopause is a factor in many common symptoms. But it's not all estrogen's fault.

There are other hormones, and they interact with every woman's unique genetic makeup at multiple levels to make up a complex matrix of intercommunication. For instance, there's cortisol (our stress hormone, which causes trouble when we have too much of it); insulin (which controls our blood sugar and weight gain); testosterone and progesterone (two other sex hormones that are ebbing, in addition to estrogen); thyroid (a "master hormone" that, if it's not in balance, can create symptoms that mimic menopause); and leptin and ghrelin (which manage our energy balance and weight).

As if those weren't enough moving parts, your unique genetic makeup interacts with those hormones differently from everyone else's. I'm talking about your neurotransmitters, nutrient levels, stress responses, gut flora, immune responses, physical and mental health history, and mindset.

The good news is that with the right functional practitioner, you can adjust all these many levers to find and address your specific issues. It's not just "you - estrogen = misery." It's a wild series of calculations + a balancing act that can equal your best self!

If you don't yet have a functional practitioner and want to kick-start your relief, here are some things you can do immediately to help alleviate some of your perimenopausal symptoms:



## Watch what you eat:

It'll feel like I'm taking away all your comfort foods, but here's a little secret: The more you follow these tips, the better you'll feel. Which means you won't need nearly as much comfort. Put it another way, your "comforts" are creating a negative feedback loop leaving you feeling worse, and needing more comfort. Stop that cycle!

- Ditch sugar and processed carbs (more about this under section 5)
- Avoid alcohol, which plumps up your blood vessels and leads to flushing
- Reduce caffeine, which increases your heart rate and can lead to hot flashes
- Hydrate!

## Skip the stress:

Remember when we told you about cortisol, your stress hormone? Anything that causes a spike in cortisol increases your hot flashes, and anything that lowers your cortisol levels reduces hot flashes. Sound good? Here's what to do:

- Meditate at a set time every day. Even if you think it's not working, the quiet sitting still quiets anxiety and stress.
- Try this tried-and-true breathing exercise, in any comfortable position: Breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds, hold that breath for 7 seconds, then breathe out through your mouth for 8 seconds while focusing on relaxing the body. Don't forget to count – that's part of the magic. This can also help you get to sleep or calm down during a crisis.
- Look into the many free stress-reduction meditation videos or apps. Even the smallest reduction in your stress levels can make a huge difference in your perimenopause symptoms.

## Exercise regularly:

This doesn't mean you have to make a big life change. A brisk twenty-minute walk each day has a surprisingly big payoff for your health. A lot of streaming services have exercise videos you can do at home. Take the stairs instead of the elevator whenever you can. Tell your smart speaker to play something fun and have a dance party. Whatever makes you sweat and feels good will help with moodiness and irritability, reduce stress, improve sleep, protect your heart, help ward off diabetes, and prevent muscle loss during perimenopause. Plus, you know. The weight-loss thing.

## Treat the symptoms:

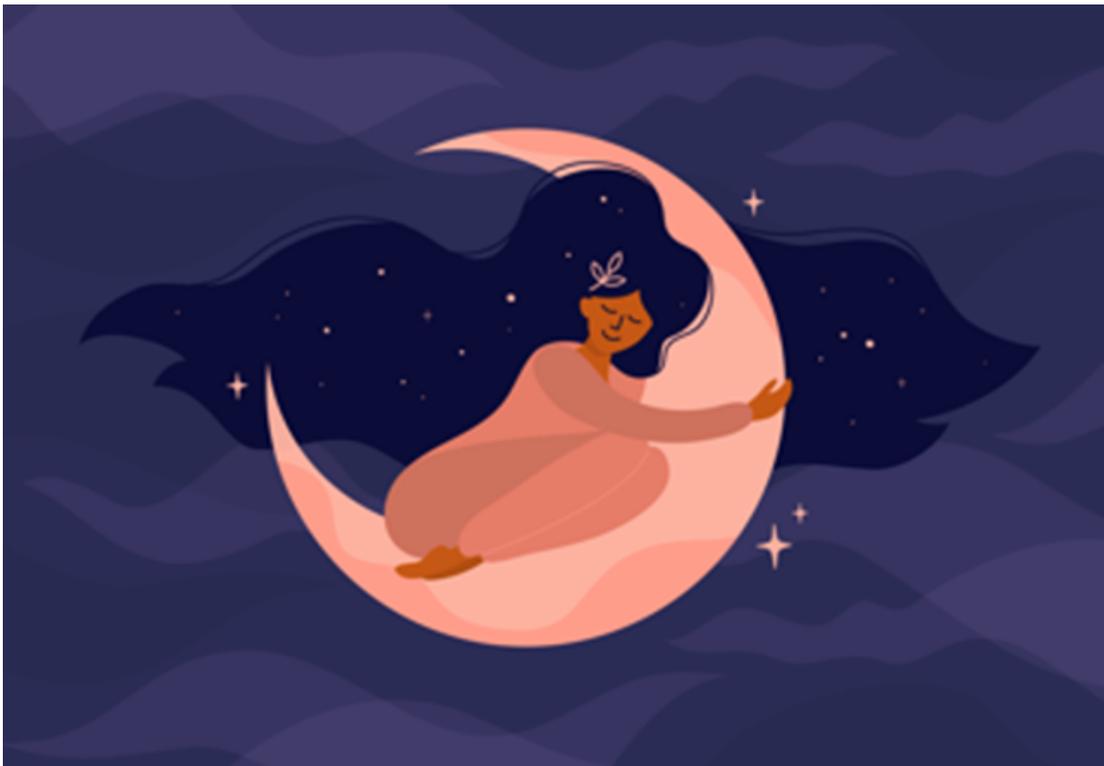
- Try vaginal moisturizers daily and a water-based lube for penetrative sex (look for organic, paraben and fragrance-free versions).
- Sleep in a cool room, ideally 68 degrees or lower, use sheets and pajamas produced from cooling materials (consider brands that make these specifically for hot flashes!), keep a fan and a large bottle of icy water next to your bed.
- Experiment with some of the many over-the-counter herbal remedies for perimenopause. A functional nutrition practitioner with a background in herbal remedies can streamline this process, but for now, you can certainly try using supplements that target the symptoms you are experiencing and see if they help. Look for products that contain hops, passionflower, black cohosh, motherwort, vitex (aka chaste berry), and/or cranberry D-mannose as well as adaptogens like ashwagandha, Rhodiola, holy basil, or healing mushrooms. These are ingredients that have been shown to improve vasomotor symptoms (think hot flashes) and to help balance cortisol and moods.

## Toxic Belief #2: I can always sleep later.

Nope. You need to sleep now. And every night, ideally for 7-8 hours. Stop laughing! By the time we get to our 40's, a lot of us have logged countless midnight hours wrangling teething babies, professional deadlines, or both simultaneously. We've pushed ourselves beyond our limits and everything has been pretty much fine, up till now.

You were able to handle all that round-the-clock pressure for years by deferring the consequences of sleeplessness. Over time, if your body doesn't get enough sleep, it compensates in other ways—such as increased cortisol (remember that?) or increased hunger cravings (more on this later).

The parts you can't see—the silent effects of lack of sleep—are even more damaging. The deepest phase of sleep is when our bodies detox, our immune system is strengthened, our memories are consolidated, our cells are repaired, our brain is strengthened, proteins are synthesized, and hormones (hormones again!) are regulated. If you skimp on sleep for too long, these “infrastructure repairs” break down and your body pays the price.



“Very funny,” we hear you saying. “Why don’t you try appearing outside my window at 3 am like some kind of peri-fairy and toss some magic sleep-dust in my eyes?” We get it. Getting to sleep, staying asleep, and getting good quality sleep is much easier said than done. Plus, like an annoyingly predictable bonus, hormone changes in perimenopause can disrupt your sleep schedule. So yes, you should try to go to sleep earlier, moving as much toward a 10 pm-6 am schedule as possible. But there are many ways you can encourage your body to get the rest it needs.

- Get into direct sunlight as soon as possible after waking to reset your circadian rhythms / align yourself with the right day and night patterns. If it’s dark, turn on all of your lights or use a Happy Light.
- Stay off screens for the hour before bed. Instead, write in your journal, organize a to-do list, or do some coloring or reading to de-stress.
- Try to use your bed only for sleeping, reading, and sex – do your TV-watching, studying, game-playing, and work somewhere else.
- Cut off caffeine by noon (or even earlier).
- Have dinner at least 3 hours before bed (and no snacks).
- Get some exercise earlier in the day.
- Try cultivating a daily practice of meditation, gratitude journaling, and/or breathing exercises.

You may have tried some or all of these, and sometimes they just aren’t enough. It’s true that for many people, more complicated factors cause sleep disturbances, including dysregulated hormones, mental health issues such as depression or anxiety, sleep apnea (problems with breathing during sleep), urinary dysfunction, or any number of other medical causes. And that is why working with a functional practitioner to understand your own body’s sleep patterns and problems and addressing them specifically is the best way to get the sleep you need.



# Toxic Belief #3: It is time to retire my vagina.

One of the most familiar and distressing combinations of changes women notice in perimenopause is their lack of sex drive and vaginal dryness (sometimes coupled with irritation, itching, or odor). These changes can wreck your self-image and strain your romantic relationships. It can feel like the loss of primal life energy for those who found sex a driving force. For other women, the lack of sex drive is less problematic, but their “sandpaper” vagina drives them crazy. Nobody wants to be thinking about their vagina all day long!

If this is you, try these tips:

- Use a water-based lube - there are many available, including organic options - when you're having sex.
- Increase the amount and type of foreplay.
- Find time with your partner when the stressors of life can be temporarily put on hold. Nothing puts on the sex breaks faster than worrying about bills or work.
- Add vibrators to the mix, either alone or with a partner.
- Use a daily vaginal moisturizer (different from lube!), making sure it has no parabens or fragrances.
- Switch all your underwear to breathable cotton. Yes, there are sexy options if you look.

Many women will find some relief with these basic strategies. For those who don't, a functional clinician can help you figure out what is going on specifically with your vagina, help you find the right herbal remedies or supplements (which can be used vaginally, orally, or transdermally), and discuss the possibility of bio-identical hormones. Don't put your vagina out to pasture yet. You can have an ongoing, fabulous, pleasurable sex life at any age.



## Toxic Belief #4:

# This is my new, bigger (or uncomfortable) body and I'm stuck with it

We believe that ALL bodies are beautiful and by no means buy into the harmful societal ideal that thin=beautiful or healthy. Ugh. If you feel good in your body and it is healthy and strong, no matter its size or shape - that is fantastic! Weight gain is, however, one of the most common and potentially upsetting changes during perimenopause. Women often find that despite eating the same, or less, and adding exercise, they continue to gain weight, especially around their midsection.

To make things worse, we've all been brainwashed with the simplistic mantra of "calories in, calories out." Unfortunately, this lie has created and sustained the deadly obesity and diabetes pandemic - and all the health issues that follow.

Our bodies are exquisitely complex systems using hormones, neurotransmitters, and feedback loops to keep us balanced and healthy. Extensive research, done over the past 100 years (yes, we have known this truth for over 100 years!) proves that our bodies' system for controlling the gain or release of fat is equally complex.

Reaching and maintaining a healthy and comfortable weight for you in perimenopause depends on:



All those hormones discussed in the first section



Each bodies' unique sensitivity to or resistance to each of these hormones



What we eat



When we eat it



The health of our gut flora



Sleep patterns



Stress levels



Genetic baggage



And more!

Further complicating our desire to feel good in our bodies and maintain a healthy weight is the natural outgrowth of the energy in-energy out myth. If weight loss only requires us to eat less and move more, then the onus for being in a bigger body is on us. We can internalize the belief that laziness and lack of willpower are the reasons we are the size we are. It's just not true!



So in some ways, yes, your body has irrevocably changed and that is OK!. But there are many ways to understand and work with your body's unique makeup to help you achieve and maintain your ideal weight and feel strong and healthy, even as you get older.

It is difficult to give comprehensive advice in a guide like this since we are all so different, there is so much information, and there is no such thing as a "one-size-fits-all" ideal nutrition plan. But here are a few things that are almost universally helpful to improve and maintain optimal health, regardless of body size, and are a good place to start.

### **Cut out as much sugar as you can manage.**

Sugar was never meant to be the ubiquitous ingredient it has become. It is in almost all commercially packaged foods and is called many different things (see image, and check packaging carefully!).



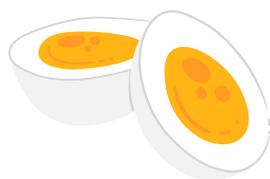
## Stop snacking.

Really. We don't need to snack. Our bodies were not meant to consume food every moment of every day. If you absolutely can't go without food between meals, make it a no-carb, healthy fat with a protein snack—like a hardboiled egg, a handful of brazil nuts, or chia pudding made with unsweetened, full-fat coconut milk. These are the types of snacks least likely to cause a high insulin spike.

The subject of WHEN to eat, not just what to eat, is too complex and dense to cover in this short guide. Just know that there are many people, including perimenopausal women, who can greatly benefit from limiting their eating windows, to give their body a break from insulin and allow for the use of fat for fuel.

## Know your fats.

Another lie we've been fed is that all fat is bad. For the past 50 years, "low fat" processed products packed with sugar and processed fillers have replaced natural foods with healthy fats in our diet – and we are more obese and sick as a result.





A functional nutritionist can help you create an individualized, healthy diet that works for your body. For now, start with these general guidelines, which probably go against everything you have learned about fat, despite being thoroughly researched over many years and shown to lead to healthier outcomes:

### **1. These fats are good:**

Monounsaturated fats are found in avocados, olive oil, nuts, and seeds. Polyunsaturated fats in fatty fish—stick to those with lower levels of mercury, such as salmon, sardines, and anchovies. Medium-chain saturated fats are found in coconut oil and cream. Add all of these to your diet.

Even saturated fats from animal foods, as long as they are organic, wild, or pasture-raised, and are fed the right foods, are not evil as we've been told, and having small portions can absolutely be part of a healthy lifestyle.

### **2. Not so good:**

Commercial vegetable oils, soybean oils, canola oils, and most processed salad dressings. They are easily oxidized in your body and cause an overabundance of Omega 6, leading to increased inflammation and a host of related health problems. Avoid these when possible.

### **3. Very bad:**

Trans fats. Never eat them. Ever. These were developed by manufacturers to make processed foods easier to store on shelves, and they are truly deadly, leading to increased inflammation, diabetes, strokes, and heart disease. Learn to read labels carefully; it is shocking how often they are used despite their effect on our health.



### **Stay hydrated:**

This one probably isn't surprising. We all know that hydration is important, that our body is mostly water, that we need to flush waste products out of our system. We know that if we don't drink enough water we get dehydrated, constipated, headaches, dry skin, and cracked lips. We shouldn't even have to include something so simple and obvious in this guide. And yet, so many of us forget to drink enough water in our busy lives, or we drink coffee, tea, juice, soda or alcohol and feel quenched—even though these can all increase dehydration.

### **Stay active:**

Walk, swim, do yoga, stretch, use exercise videos at home or join a gym. Exercise is essential for maintaining muscles, strong bones, limber joints, a healthy heart and balanced moods. While exercise alone won't keep you at a healthy weight - you can't outrun a bad diet - it definitely helps.



## Great things to have in your diet are:

- an abundance and wide variety of vegetables, at least 4-5 cups (and ideally 6-8 cups) daily – ‘eat the rainbow’ is a fantastic visual
- a variety of fruit, most often those with less sugar and more nutrients and antioxidants like all types of berries and pomegranate
- legumes, nuts, seeds, and eggs, organic sprouted tofu, tempeh or miso, and, if you’re not vegetarian, a variety of organic, grass-fed meats, pasture-raised poultry, and wild-caught fatty fish.
- limited portions of whole, unprocessed grains like brown rice, quinoa, buckwheat, steel-cut oats, or starchy vegetables such as sweet potatoes and squash.
- fermented foods like sauerkraut, unsweetened kefir, kimchi, pickled vegetables, and unsweetened yogurt with active cultures (if you know you have high histamine intolerance or these foods trigger headaches, take them out of your diet and add a probiotic instead).

These are just a few helpful tips to get started. If and when you decide to work with a functional nutrition professional to get to the root of your health and weight issues, you’ll most likely dig deep via an in-depth questionnaire about your health history, current and past diets, sleep patterns, poop, stress, weight over time, and a host of other symptoms that can be related to the same root causes. They may want to run very specific lab tests of your saliva, blood, breath, pee, or poop to discover hidden food sensitivities, where you are in or out of hormonal balance, and your overall gut health or dysfunction. The results of these tests are a powerful tool, and you’ll be amazed at how much control you actually have over your body. Don’t give up. Don’t feel helpless. There’s so much you can do! .

# Toxic Belief #5: I've peaked. It's all downhill from here

Absolutely not! If you commit to taking care of your health, this does NOT need to be true for you! If you prioritize your health and well-being, midlife can be a time of increased confidence, professional and personal accomplishments, motivation to fulfill life-long dreams, energy to become more creative or learn new skills, and a time to cultivate and appreciate deep relationships with partners, family and friends. It is a time to celebrate all that we have accomplished, the lives we have touched, the small miracles of day to day life, and the dreams we still want to fulfill. So no, don't buy into this notion that it's all downhill. It's what you want it to be, and what you make of it. This is your time.



# Why and How to Find the Best Functional Health Practitioner for You

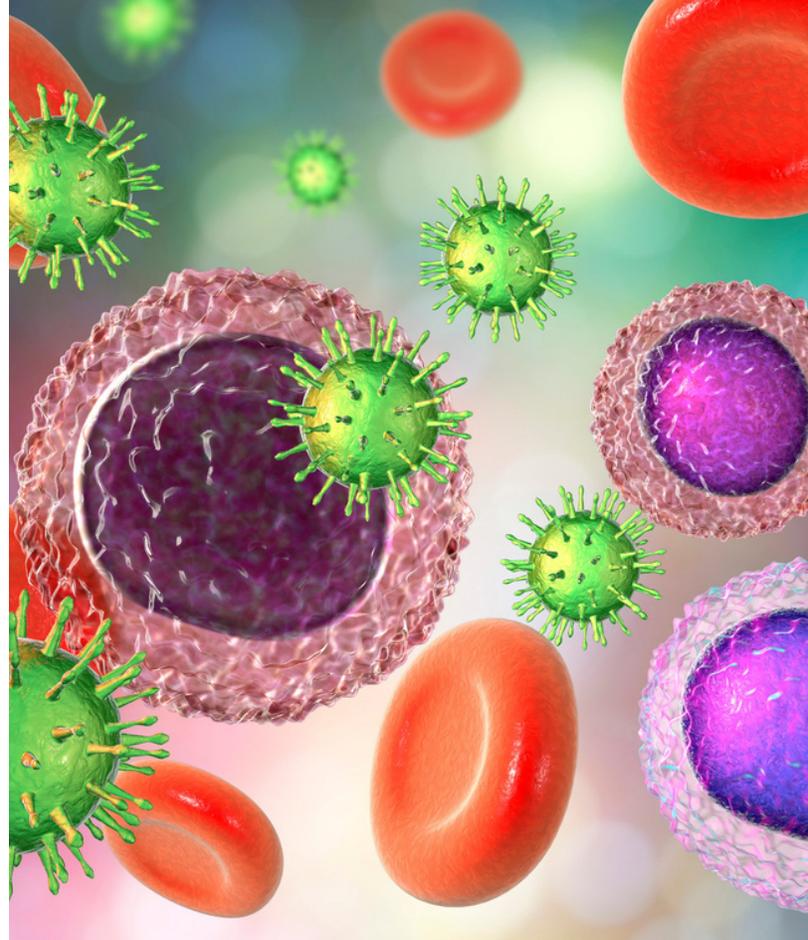
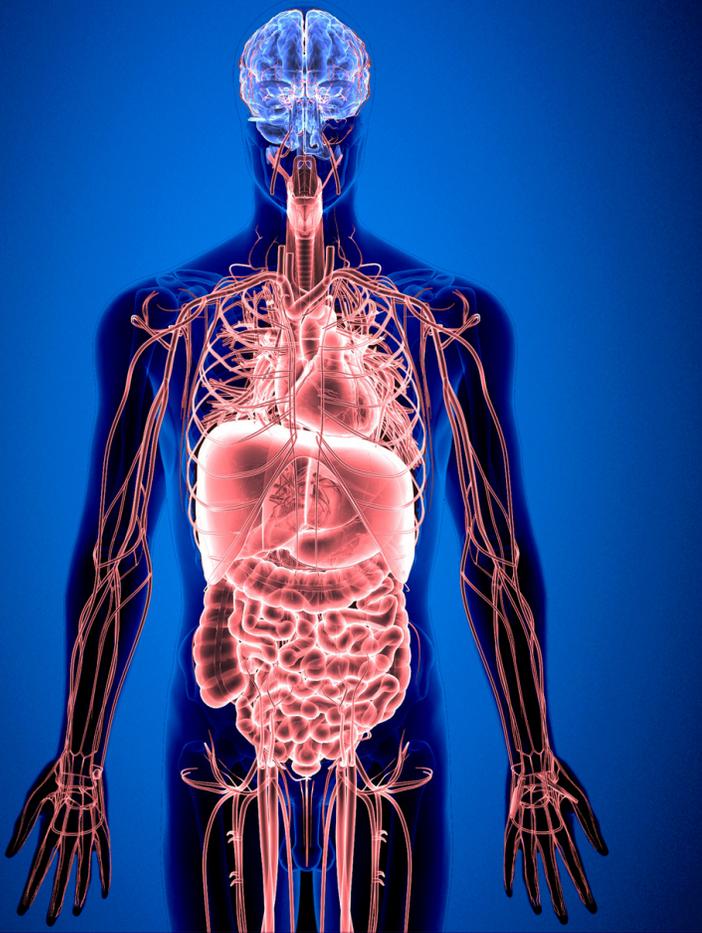
According to a Mayo Clinic study in 2019, only 7% of conventional doctors in the specialties of Family and Internal Medicine and Ob/Gyns felt they were “adequately prepared” to manage women going through the menopause transition.

You may have already experienced this. You’ve mentioned your hot flashes, difficulty losing weight, or trouble sleeping. Maybe your provider was empathetic and diligent and within the 15 minutes allotted for your appointment, they offered some symptomatic relief, a cream, hormone replacement, sleeping pills, or some dietary advice—none of which really got to the root of your issues. But more likely, you were told that your symptoms are “normal” for this time of life, handed a pamphlet with a title like “Menopause and Midlife”, or reassured that “this too will pass” without any meaningful relief.

It’s not really their fault. They’re working in an insurance-based system that only pays for certain types of visits, requires providers to see between 20-30 patients per day, and offers no compensation for deep dives into patients’ histories, diet, lifestyle practices, or sleep hygiene. They get limited training in even the best medical schools on nutrition and guiding and supporting patients through making crucial changes for optimal health. They are trained in the sickness-care rather than a health-care model, which makes them fantastic at recognizing and treating overt diseases, but terrible at preventing them.

We know because this is how we were trained in my top-notch Nurse Practitioner program, as were the many exceptional and talented physicians, NPs, and PAs I have had the privilege of working with over the past 16 years. This training and this model are effective and essential to healing us once we are sick with certain illnesses. It is not ideal at helping us prevent issues, catching and reversing problems before they are qualified as a true disease, or guiding us through ‘normal’ and expected life changes in ways that promote optimal health.

To complicate things even further, the conventional medical model divides our bodies up into discrete parts, so you may see your orthopedic surgeon for issues with joint pain, an endocrinologist to manage your thyroid and type 2 diabetes, a dermatologist to treat your eczema and acne, your gastroenterologist to decrease your reflux or irritable bowel syndrome, your gynecologist to help with hot flashes and vaginal dryness, and on and on. Each of these specialists is important and can do an excellent job caring for that particular part of the body.



Our bodies, however, are not simply the sum of our discreet parts. Our bodies are exquisitely complex systems, with chemical messengers including over fifty hormones, seven distinct neurotransmitters, immune cells and chemicals, feedback loops involving multiple cells, organs and glands - all working together throughout every system in our body to help us function. In addition to this, our digestive system is not only an extension of our nervous system (sometimes called the 2nd brain) and where much of our immune chemicals are made and activated, but it is host to over 40 billion bacteria from up to 400 different species that together act as another organ and can affect many aspects of our health.

In the Functional Medicine Model, we take ALL of this into account while supporting the work of your other healthcare providers. We use a deep dive into your medical and life history, targeted labs, unique assessment tools and a wide variety of treatment modalities to get to the root of your health issues and find healing opportunities to restore optimal health. The woman experiencing all of the issues above and seeing all of the specialists listed could actually have a few root causes that are triggering, contributing to or worsening every single one of those symptoms and disease processes. Finding and addressing these root causes is what Functional Medical Providers do.

# Finding the Right Functional Provider for You

## Here are some things to consider when you are looking for your provider:

1. Do they have expertise that fits your situation? If you have been diagnosed with a certain disease, are at a certain time of life, or are struggling with a specific issue, there are likely functional providers with experience working with others in similar situations. All functional providers will look to root causes, but having expertise in YOUR issue can be helpful. For example, at Positively Thriving: Functional Wellness for Women, we have expertise working with women who are experiencing hormonal and other disruptions associated with perimenopause and helping them regain optimal health.

2. Do you trust and like the provider? Functional providers go deep. We look at your history starting in-utero all the way up to the present, your family history, any traumas, diseases, treatments, major changes, relationships, environmental exposures, causes of stress, or other issues that may affect your health. You want to work with someone with whom you feel comfortable sharing this history and whom you trust to both have empathy and expertise around utilizing this information effectively.

3. Will your functional provider work with your other healthcare providers, whether they are conventional physicians, NPs or PAs, or ancillary providers like acupuncturists, chiropractors or naturopaths? Your functional provider should have experience ordering and interpreting conventional labs and understanding diseases and their treatments. They should also have studied functional methodology in addition to their conventional medical training.

4. Does the provider provide realistic expectations or overambitious (or even magical-seeming) promises? Do they state clearly their processes, costs, types of assessments, and tests they may recommend? Do you trust them to respect your budget and to weigh the benefits of any lab test or other costly therapeutics carefully before recommending these to you?

5. Do they respect the fact that you are an expert in your own body, treat you as a co-partner in your healthcare journey, review all options, pros, and cons about any recommendation, and take your ideas and concerns seriously and non-judgmentally, trusting you to make the best decisions for yourself?

Once you find someone who specializes in your specific issues, that you trust and like, who can work with your current providers and provides realistic expectations, and truly respects you as a partner—you have struck functional health gold!

If you are experiencing any challenges, health issues, or frustrations with your perimenopause transition, we would be honored for the opportunity to be the right functional healthcare partner for you.

This Consumer Awareness Guide is Presented By:



Positively Thriving: Functional Wellness for Women

This Guide has been created to provide you with information you can act on right now to improve your quality of life during your perimenopause transition and to introduce the benefits of working with a functional healthcare practitioner to achieve optimal health and wellness.

If you would like to learn more - join our Facebook page at:  
[www.facebook.com/groups/navigatingthechange/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/navigatingthechange/)

**At Positively Thriving: Functional Wellness for Women, we empower women in their 40s and beyond to transform their health by addressing their unique hormonal issues with our proprietary 'Thriving You' program to safely and significantly improve their quality of life - guaranteed**



## About the Author



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Lyssa Jaye is honored to work with women as a partner in their healthcare journey. Lyssa has 16 years of experience as a registered nurse, board-certified family nurse practitioner, and functional nutrition and health practitioner - all with a focus on women's health.

Lyssa lives in Orinda, CA and has offices in Oakland and Marin County, and also sees patients via telehealth. She is passionate about social justice, equity in health care and is a strong advocate for making functional healthcare accessible to all.