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### Navigating the Stages of Menopause

(NC)—The average age of menopause is 50 to 51 years of age but it can occur naturally between the ages of 40 and 55. Many women therefore who are experiencing the signs and symptoms of menopause may not realize what's causing them and that there are steps they can take to address them.

The entire menopausal process occurs in four stages: pre-menopause, perimenopause, menopause and post menopause.

**Pre-menopause** refers to a woman's fertile life, which ranges from her first menstrual period to her last menstrual period.

**Perimenopause** encompasses the years preceding menopause and it's during this stage that the hormone levels change and levels of estrogen decline. Perimenopause typically takes place between 45 and 50 years of age and can span a 2 to 6 year period of time. Early signs of perimenopause usually occur in a woman's mid 40s.

**Menopause** is the permanent termination of menstruation and fertility. This stage begins when a woman has her last period. Menopause can be defined by more than 12 consecutive period-free months. At this stage, ovaries no longer produce eggs as hormone production stops, and common changes become noticeable – including vaginal dryness and loss of sex drive.

**Post menopause** is determined after a woman's menstrual period hasn't reoccurred within a period of 12 months. Since the life expectancy of a woman is over 80 years of age, she will live 30 or more years in a post-menopausal state.

#### MENOPAUSE RELIEF

Menopause is not a disease, but a natural stage in a woman's life cycle. Menopause causes hormonal imbalances that trigger dozens of uncomfortable symptoms including hot flashes, headaches, nervousness, depression, irritability, vaginal dryness, sleep disturbances, mood swings and night sweats.

Due to the growing concerns about the risks of HRT, both doctors and menopausal women have started to pay more attention to safe and natural methods for managing menopausal – including diet, exercise, lifestyle and herbal remedies.

"I have long been a firm believer in the benefits of natural medicine, and for menopausal symptoms in particular, I recommend products containing clinically proven ingredients such as black cohosh, dong quai, chastetree berry to name a few. My patients have done very well with the **femMED** products. I know this company has done the necessary research that is vital for a successful outcome with my patients, says Dr. Pettle, obstetrician gynecologist, and specialist in integrative medicine.