

New Menopause Research Focuses on Black Women

Black women experience more menopausal symptoms for a longer time compared with white women.

January 31, 2023 By Laura Schmidt

Washington University ob-gyn Makeba Williams, MD, whose expertise is menopause care, reviewed 20 years of literature on [menopause](#) and found that only 17 academic papers delve into how menopause symptoms affect Black women. Williams was instrumental in opening a [menopause clinic](#) in the Barnes-Jewish Center for Advanced Medicine in St. Louis earlier this year.

“We embarked upon this review of the literature to better understand the African-American woman’s experience in menopause,” Williams said in a [St. Louis American article](#). “There has been much written of late about how Black women are doing with regard to their maternal health, and yet we know that life doesn’t stop just after you have a baby.”

Williams and her team published a [literature review](#) in the journal Menopause about Black women’s experiences in menopause and found that Black women endure some of the more disruptive symptoms of menopause, such as [hot flashes](#) and [night sweats](#), longer compared with white women (10 years versus 6.5 years).

“My coauthors and I reviewed more than 20 years of literature to understand how Black women were expressing their symptoms, what their experience was in menopause and what we found is that there are a whole variety of symptoms that women experience but may experience them differently than how white women or other racial and ethnic minority women experience them,” Williams said.

However, Black women are half as likely to use [hormone therapy](#) to treat the symptoms of menopause.

Williams noted that Black women experience differences in physical, psychological, social and quality of life measures during menopause, which “becomes pretty problematic as we also found that African-American women are less likely to be offered treatment for these menopausal symptoms.”

Black women are less likely to initiate discussions about their experiences with menopause,

according to the data. “[Medical professionals] are less likely to hear about the concerns, so we need to sort of shift our focus and help health care providers recognize that there is not a universal menopausal experience,” Williams said.

She suggests increasing representation of Black women in menopause literature to better understand their experiences and ensure that they receive timely care to improve their quality of life.

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