Meet Doctor Rob Koss

Dr. Koss specializes in obstetrics and gynecology at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge.

When Rob Koss was in medical school, he knew within two hours of working in labor and delivery that he wanted to focus on obstetrics and gynecology. Since beginning his practice, Dr. Koss has delivered hundreds of babies and guided as many women through one of life’s significant natural transitions: menopause.

“Menopause is going to happen. It’s the natural course of things,” says Koss. “For most women, it’s a relatively smooth road. Up to 80% of my patients don’t require any treatment for their menopausal symptoms. Around 10% have major burdens. Fortunately, today there are many options for them.”

In addition to those who experience difficult symptoms, women who have had breast cancer need special care as menopause begins. For them, antidepressants (rather than hormones) are sometimes prescribed to reduce hot flashes.

Koss understands that women are naturally curious but encourages them to be open-minded about menopause. “Men don’t research the prostate! Women anticipate. They want to know what will happen before it occurs, so they search out information about menopause. Then they worry about symptoms that may never arise for them.

“You can’t anticipate your labor, and you can’t know in advance what menopause will be like for you. Every woman’s journey is unique,” Dr. Koss says. “There’s just no way to predict what will happen to a particular woman during this natural turn in her life -- despite what Oprah says.”

Hot Tips for Hot Flashes

Many women experience hot flashes at some point before or after menopause when their estrogen levels are declining. A hot flash is not a medical problem; it’s a normal response to natural hormonal changes in your body.

Smoking, obesity, inactivity, and having had tubal ligation or surgical menopause increase the odds of getting hot flashes. African American women are impacted by menopausal symptoms at higher rates, as well.

If hot flashes become especially bothersome, there are several options your doctor may want you to consider. There are also simple adjustments you can make in your life which can help:

- Wear natural fibers, and dress in layers.
- Sip a cold drink.
- Avoid spicy foods, caffeine, and alcohol.
- Eat healthily, and enjoy smaller, more frequent meals to avoid the heat generated by digesting a large amount of food.
- Don’t smoke.
- Exercise 30 minutes a day -- but not within three hours of bedtime.
- Wash your hands in cold water as soon as you feel a hot flash coming.
- Use fewer blankets, or lower the temperature of your bedroom.
- Avoid stressful situations.

Prayer: I know I will never be able to anticipate all that you have in store for my future, Lord. Give me faith to trust your plan for me as it unfolds, day by day. Amen.

September Is Menopause Awareness Month.

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