

MENOPAUSE

What is menopause?

Menopause is the point in a woman's life that marks the end of fertility and the menstrual cycle. You're considered to be going through menopause if you haven't had a period for at least one year. Menopause typically occurs between the ages of 40 and 60, but for some women, it can start earlier. It's a natural process that often comes along with a variety of uncomfortable symptoms.

What causes menopause?

Menopause represents the natural decline in your body's production of reproductive hormones: estrogen and progesterone.

A total hysterectomy – a procedure to remove your uterus and ovaries – induces menopause, because you no longer have ovaries to release eggs and produce reproductive hormones. In some circumstances, chemotherapy and radiation therapy cancer treatments can induce menopause and end fertility.

A tiny percentage of women experience premature menopause before age 40. That usually results from primary ovarian insufficiency, when your ovaries fail to produce healthy hormone levels. This lack of reproductive hormones can often be linked to genetic factors or an autoimmune disease.

The hormone imbalance is what's responsible for many menopausal symptoms.

What are the symptoms of menopause?

Menopause symptoms include:

- Chills
- Fatigue
- Irritability
- Hot flashes
- Weight gain
- Night sweats
- Thinning hair
- Lower energy
- Vaginal dryness
- Painful intercourse
- Decreased sex drive
- Urinary symptoms
- Slowed metabolism
- Disrupted sleep and poor sleep quality
- Irregular menstrual cycles during perimenopause



What are the treatments for menopause?

Menopause doesn't require medical treatment to address the cause, since it's a natural biological process. Instead, menopause treatments are centred on reducing symptoms and managing chronic conditions associated with aging and menopause.

Some menopause treatments include:

- Hormone therapy to restore hormonal balance
- Vaginal estrogen usually applied directly to the vagina as a topical cream
- Low-dose antidepressants or selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)
- Other medications to reduce risk factors, such as bone loss or high blood pressure
- Vitamins and supplements, for example, a vitamin D supplement to strengthen bones and reduce the risk of osteoporosis
- Soy products and phytoestrogens
- Vaginal/vulvar laser therapy

There are also lifestyle and home remedies to relieve your menopause symptoms, including:

- Yoga
- Acupuncture
- Avoiding smoking
- Exercising regularly
- Getting plenty of rest
- Stress-relief and meditation
- Healthy eating and nutrition
- Pelvic floor muscle exercises