



Menopause

For most people, menopause is a natural stage of life. Learning what to expect can help you make choices that suit your health and preferences.

What is menopause?

Menopause happens when you stop having monthly periods and your ovaries stop releasing eggs. As this happens, your hormone levels change.

Most people reach menopause around age 50.

If menopause happens:

- before you're 40, it's called premature ovarian insufficiency
- before you're 45, it's called early menopause.

Premature or early menopause can happen on its own or can occur after surgery or cancer treatment.

Menopause usually happens gradually. The time leading up to menopause is called perimenopause (or menopause transition).

Perimenopause starts when you first notice changes in your menstrual cycle and ends one year after your final period.

What are the symptoms?

Everyone experiences menopause differently.

Common symptoms include:

- hot flushes
- vaginal dryness
- night sweats
- trouble sleeping.

Some people also report:

- low mood or feeling sad
- palpitations (a racing or fluttering heart)
- brain fog or difficulty concentrating.

Research has not confirmed that this second group are direct symptoms of menopause. Other life changes may cause them. The good news is that you can manage these symptoms with the right support.

And some people feel relieved when their periods stop and they no longer need to use contraception.

You may have some of these symptoms, or none. They may be mild. Or they may affect your sleep and daily life.

We can't predict who will get symptoms, how severe they might be or how long they'll last.

What causes menopause?

Menopause happens when your ovaries run out of eggs and your periods eventually stop. As this happens, your hormone levels change and you may experience menopausal symptoms.

Premature or early menopause can happen on its own or can occur after surgery or cancer treatment.

How is menopause diagnosed?

Most people don't need any tests to diagnose menopause. Your doctor can usually diagnose menopause based on your age and symptoms.

If you're under 45 and may be going through menopause, your doctor may suggest a blood test to check your hormone levels.

Managing symptoms

People experience menopause differently, so there's no 'one-size-fits all' way to manage symptoms.

Many people manage without medical treatment.

But if your symptoms affect your daily life or sleep, support and treatment options are available.

Hot flushes and night sweats

These are the most common symptoms.

You may find relief by:

- avoiding triggers, like hot drinks, spicy food, alcohol, stress or hot weather
- dressing in layers
- using a fan
- practising relaxation techniques like mindfulness or meditation.

For night sweats, you can:

- wear light, breathable sleepwear (or none)
- use lighter bedding or separate covers
- keep the bedroom cool or use a fan.

Other approaches that may help

These options may not stop your symptoms, but they can help you cope better and support your long-term health.

- Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) can help reduce distress caused by hot flushes and night sweats. It can also help improve sleep. CBT helps you notice thoughts that make your symptoms feel worse. It teaches you to challenge those thoughts and replace them with more helpful ones.
- Hypnosis is guided relaxation and focused attention. It can help you feel calmer, reduce hot flushes, improve sleep and give you more control over menopause symptoms.

Healthy lifestyle habits can also help:

- regular exercise to support mood, sleep, heart health and bone strength
- healthy eating to support overall wellbeing
- stress reduction techniques
- limiting alcohol and other drugs.

Talk with your doctor if you want help making lifestyle changes or trying CBT or hypnosis.

Medical treatments

Most people choose not to take prescription medicine for their symptoms. But if your symptoms affect your quality of life, medical treatment can help.

Talk with your doctor about the benefits and risks of each option so you can decide what's right for you.

Non-hormonal medicines

Some prescription medicines can reduce hot flushes.

Read our fact sheet [Treating hot flushes with non-hormonal medicines: Alternatives to menopausal hormone therapy](#) for more information.

Menopausal Hormone Therapy (MHT)

MHT is a prescription medicine that effectively reduces hot flushes and night sweats and may improve vaginal dryness. Read our fact sheet [Menopausal Hormone Therapy \(MHT\)](#) for more information.

For more information

The Women's fact sheets

- Menopausal Hormone Therapy (MHT)
thewomens.org.au/health-information/fact-sheets#menopausal-hormone-therapy
- Treating hot flushes with non-hormonal medicines: Alternatives to menopausal hormone therapy
thewomens.org.au/health-information/fact-sheets#treating-hot-flushes-an-alternative-to-hormonal-replacement-therapy

Menopause - Better Health Channel

betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/ConditionsAndTreatments/menopause

Menopause - Jean Hailes for Women's Health

jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/menopause

Menopause - NHS UK

nhs.uk/conditions/menopause

Mindfulness and mental health - Beyond Blue

beyondblue.org.au/mental-health/wellbeing/mindfulness-and-mental-health

My Meno Plan

<https://mymenoplan.org>

Patient information - Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecologists UK

rcog.org.uk/for-the-public/browse-our-patient-information - search for menopause

Perimenopause, menopause and mental health - Beyond Blue

beyondblue.org.au/mental-health/womens-mental-health/perimenopause-menopause-mental-health

Queer Menopause

queermenopause.com

Do you need an interpreter?



You can ask for an interpreter if you need one.

Family Violence Support

1800 Respect National Helpline

You can get help if you have experienced sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse.

You can call any time of day or night.

1800 737 732

1800respect.org.au

Shared decision making

The best decisions about your care happen when you and your healthcare team make them together. Your team should give you clear information, explain your options and listen to your questions and concerns.

Before your appointment, write down your questions and take them with you. To begin with, try these 3 questions:

- What are my options? (including wait and watch)
- What are the possible benefits and harms of those options?
- How likely are each of those benefits and harms to happen to me?

For more information, visit the Ask Share Know website.

<https://askshareknow.org.au>

Disclaimer: This fact sheet provides general information only. For specific advice about your healthcare needs, you should seek advice from your health professional. The Royal Women's Hospital does not accept any responsibility for loss or damage arising from your reliance on this fact sheet instead of seeing a health professional. If you require urgent medical attention, please contact your nearest emergency department.

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