

Menopause

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Menopause is a time later in your life when your body undergoes certain hormonal changes. It is a purely natural process and are characterised by the fact that your periods stop permanently. When menopause is complete, you will no longer be able to bare children. Menopause typically occurs between 49 and 53 years of age. Menopause are complete when you have not had any vaginal bleeding (periods) for a year.

Symptoms

In the years before menopause, a woman's periods typically become irregular, which means that periods may be longer or shorter in duration or be lighter or heavier in the amount of blood flow. Women often also experience hot flushes that lasts between 30 seconds and 10 minutes. Hot flushes usually stops after a year or two and may also be associated with shivering, sweating, and reddening of the skin. Menopause can also lead to:

- Vaginal dryness, discharge & itching
- Having trouble sleeping
- Mood changes (like depression)
- Having a lack of energy
- Joint pain
- Back pain
- Breast enlargement & pain
- Heart palpitations
- Headaches & dizziness
- Dry & itchy skin
- Night sweats
- Weight gain
- Urinary incontinence (See page 104)

The severity and types of the symptoms will vary between different women.

Risks & Complications

The long term risk of menopause is the development of cardiac problems and osteoporosis. Osteoporosis is when your bone density decrease and you become more susceptible to bone breaks, especially wrist and hip breaks when you fall. (See page 102-103)



Treatment

Specific menopause treatment are usually not necessary. When you feel like your symptoms are very severe, you can consider seeing a doctor. Some symptoms can however be relieved with non-medical treatment:

- Hot flushes – Avoid smoking, caffeine, and alcohol. You can also sleep in a cool room or use a fan.
- Sleeping problems – Exercise might help.
- Vaginal dryness – Vaginal moisturizers
- Mood changes & depression – Join a support group (Ask about support groups at your local clinic)
- Osteoporosis – Smoking cessation, increased Vitamin D intake (Such as fish, eggs, dairy products), doing regular weight-bearing exercises (even if you are only using your body weight)

Early menopause

Although menopause usually occur between the ages of 49 and 52, there can be several reasons why someone reach menopause before these ages. They are, among others: thyroid disease, genetics, diabetes mellitus, chemotherapy, radiotherapy, cigarette smoking and obesity.

Danger Signs

When menopause has been reached, any form of vaginal bleeding are seen as a danger sign. You need to go see your doctor urgently if this is the case.

All and all – Menopause might feel like a negative experience at times, it should however not be viewed as a medical condition but rather as a life transition or a symbol of aging.

“And the beauty of a woman, with passing years only grows!”
Audrey Hepburn

