

# Menopause Terminology

## Cheat Sheet

### Antidepressants

Prescription drugs that are used to treat depression and anxiety. In menopause they could be prescribed to reduce the occurrence of hot flashes and night sweats.

### BHRT (Bioidentical Hormone Replacement Therapy)

Similar to hormone replacement therapy, BHRT is used for relieving menopause symptoms and is chemically synthesized hormones that mimic the ones produced by the body. It can be estrogen alone, or in combination with progestin. There is confusion (and controversy) between what is BHRT, and what is HRT. It's not you.

### Climacteric

The phase of female aging marking the transition from the reproductive phase to the non-reproductive state. When the term is used, it includes the peri-menopause transition and the time just before and just after peri-menopause.

### Compounding

Making medications "from scratch" and adapting them to the specific needs of the patient. The active ingredient is put into a delivery system (i.e. lotion, capsule, suppository) most appropriate for the efficacy of the medication, and the patient's needs.

### Estrogen

The Queen of female sex hormones, produced mainly by the ovaries; it regulates hundreds of female body functions including puberty, the menstrual cycle, metabolism, sex, and impacts many of the menopause symptoms.

### Foggy Brain

A phrase used to identify a number of symptoms that describe feelings of confusion, forgetfulness, lack of focus and mental clarity.

### FSH (Follicle stimulating hormone)

Hormone produced in the pituitary gland that stimulates the growth and development of ovarian follicles that develop into mature egg cells. It is at its highest just prior to ovulation.

### Hormones

Chemical messengers produced by specific glands that influence the body's growth and development process. There are different hormones to control the various bodily functions. The three main sex hormones for women are estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone.

### Hot Flashes

The most common menopause related symptom. It is characterized by red flushed face and neck, sweating, and increased heartbeat.

### HRT/HT (Hormone Replacement Therapy/Hormone Therapy)

Chemically synthesized prescription drugs that are used to treat menopause symptoms. HRT levels out the amount of estrogen in the body. It usually refers to estrogen alone, or in combination with progestin (progesterone).

### Induced Menopause

The most common cause of induced menopause is the surgical removal of both ovaries. Menopause occurs the day the ovaries are removed.

### Luteinizing Hormone (LH)

LH and FSH work together to regulate the menstrual cycle and egg production. They rise and fall during the monthly cycle. During the menopause transition, they get out of balance with progesterone and estrogen.

### Menopause

Natural part of aging, when a woman's period stops for 12 consecutive months (without any medical intervention). The average age of reaching menopause is 51 years, plus one year.



## Menstrual Cycle

Monthly cycle of changes in the ovaries and the lining of uterus. During this cycle an egg cell is released from the ovaries and can be fertilized by sperm. If pregnancy doesn't occur, the cycle ends with shedding of the uterus lining resulting in menstruation.

## Night Sweats

Hot flashes that occur during the night and often intervene with sleep; characterized by intensive sweating.

## Osteoporosis

Disease in which the bone density decreases; bones become brittle and fragile, and person has a higher risk of fractures, even with little or no trauma. It is typically the result of hormone changes, or deficiency of calcium or Vitamin D.

## Ovulation

At approximately Day 14 of the menstrual cycle, a mature egg cell is released from the ovary. The tricky thing here is that during peri-menopause ovulation is not regular and women can become pregnant by thinking they aren't ovulating... and sometimes there is a big surprise...pregnancy! It is easy to lose track of your cycle because it is so irregular.

## Peri-menopause

Time period prior to menopause characterized by menstrual irregularities, hot flashes, and mood swings. Generally the recognized medical definition includes the first year of menopause.

## Post-menopause

This term can be confusing. It means the time period after menopause. Sometimes the words menopause and post-menopause are used interchangeably. Once a woman has reached menopause (12 months of no period, plus a year), she will be post-menopausal for the rest of her life.

## Premature Menopause

Menopause that spontaneously occurs before normal menopausal age. Usually this term is used for menopause occurring before 40 years of age.

## Pre-menopause

The whole reproductive period prior to peri-menopause. Also referred to as the reproducing years (18-40). This term is not used very often.

## Progesterone

Female sex hormone, produced mainly by the ovaries after the egg is released. Amongst many other functions, progesterone prepares uterus to sustain a fertilized egg. If there is no egg, then the lining is shed and menstruation occurs.

## Testosterone

For women, testosterone regulates bone and muscle health, mood, energy level and most important - their sex drive. Also, ovaries need testosterone to make estrogen. For men, this hormone is essential in developing the male body characteristics and for sperm production.

## Urinary Incontinence

Involuntary loss of urine caused by number of conditions, like infection or pelvic relaxation.

## Vaginal Atrophy

Vaginal atrophy is when vaginal tissue becomes thin, dry and shrunken (picture a raisin). It occurs very slowly after menopause due to the reduced amount of estrogen, and may not be noticed. The good news is it can be improved with various types of lubricants and estrogen treatments.

## Vaginitis

An inflammation of the vagina that can result in discharge, itching and pain. It is usually caused by a change in the balance of vaginal bacteria, or an infection, or reduced estrogen levels after menopause.