

What is Menopause?

The word 'menopause' in conversation has evolved to be a generic descriptor to explain weird behaviour attributed to crazy hormone fluctuations during our midlife transition. Like when we forget the name of our best friend or our kids; or struggle to put a sentence together with at least one noun...that's the menopause transition. It may feel like early onset Alzheimer's but it's fluctuating hormones.

Menopause sneaks up on you, taking somewhere between 5 to 10 years, starting with perimenopause.

between us girls

Hang on to your tampons ladies because this will probably be a roller-coaster of emotions, and while some women will breeze through the transition, most of us are going to have lots to talk about. Be aware that your period could get so heavy that you may not be comfortable leaving home. Also be aware that your sleep patterns could be interrupted with all types of hot and cold adventures (not to be confused with those great hot and sweaty adventures...sigh).

Perimenopause...usually during your 40s

The transition from reproductive life to menopause. It is characterized by menstrual irregularities. Some hallmark symptoms are: shortening of menstrual cycle, shorter or longer duration of bleeding, heavier bleeding, increased mood disturbances, sleeplessness, and everyone's favourite - hot flashes. Women have reported having up to 50 a day, and others not- a-one. As this illustrates, symptoms can be wide-ranging and are different for every woman. Perimenopause is a journey...sometimes as long as ten years.

Heads Up! Many a surprise pregnancy has occurred during peri-menopause. Just because you haven't had a period in 4 months, does not mean that you won't ovulate the next month. Surprise! Baby names are so adorable these days.

As a guideline, 25% of women will experience very little upheaval during the transition. 25% will be at the other end of the spectrum with severe and debilitating symptoms. The remaining 50% will experience symptoms that can be mitigated with lifestyle choices, and/or medical interventions including hormone therapy.

Heads Up! Not every woman will be doing the happy dance when they reach menopause. Some will be very sad because it is the end of their reproductive years.

Menopause...can be late 40s/early 50s

Menopause is medically recognized after 12 months of amenorrhea (absence of menstruation). The ovaries severely reduce production of estrogen and progesterone and there is not a menstrual period for one year. If there is a period after six months then the clock begins again to count out the 12 months. Women who smoke may reach menopause two years earlier than non-smoking women, and daughters tend to experience menopause at nearly the same age as their mother.

The most important things that you can do for yourself during the menopause transition are self-knowledge and self-care. Keep informed. Keep fit. Eat well. Sleep well. And know what brings you joy.

Postmenopause

Often the terms menopause and postmenopause are used interchangeably. Postmenopause includes one year past the 12 months of amenorrhea.

Menopause + One Year = Postmenopause

Build Agency.
Be Your Advocate.

Vergo.