



## Menopause

Menopause is a point in time – your final period. You know you've reached menopause when you have not had a period for 12 months, with no other medical reason for it.

Your periods stop because your ovaries stop releasing eggs and producing the hormones oestrogen and progesterone.

Some people will reach menopause due to some cancer treatments, or surgery that removes both ovaries.

## Perimenopause

Perimenopause is the time around menopause – the years leading up to and just after your final period.

In perimenopause, the levels of oestrogen and progesterone, hormones produced by your ovaries, fluctuate (change). This causes your periods to change and many people start experiencing symptoms.

Many women say they feel confused and not like themselves during perimenopause.

## Postmenopause

Postmenopause starts after menopause and continues for the rest of your life.

## Talking to your doctor

There are many qualified health professionals who can support you during the menopause transition.

Learning more about perimenopause and menopause can help you have an informed discussion with your health professional.

Not all health issues and concerns experienced in your midlife are due directly to the menopause transition. Some symptoms can also be due to other health conditions or issues.

It is important you see your doctor if you are experiencing worrying symptoms to make sure you receive an accurate diagnosis and appropriate care.

## More information and support

Visit [health.gov.au/perimenopause](https://health.gov.au/perimenopause) for more information on perimenopause and menopause, real stories, resources, a guide for talking with your doctor, and information in a range of languages.



**Everyone experiences  
perimenopause and  
menopause differently**

## Age

Perimenopause usually starts in your 40s, but it can be earlier or later. It can last between 2 and 10 years, with an average around 4 to 6 years.

Menopause usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55, with 51 years being the average.

Some women experience early menopause (before age 45) or premature ovarian insufficiency (POI) (before age 40).

Medically induced menopause can happen if you have some cancer treatments, or surgery that removes both ovaries.

## Symptoms

About 1 in 2 women report having mild menopause-related symptoms. Around 1 in 4 have symptoms severe enough to affect their daily life.

If you have symptoms, they will usually start in perimenopause, unless you have medically induced menopause which can bring on symptoms suddenly.

You might experience a combination of physical, emotional and/or mental health symptoms, or no symptoms at all. Common symptoms include:

- changes to period frequency or heavier or lighter bleeding
- hot flushes and night sweats
- brain fog or forgetfulness
- sleep problems and changes in sleep patterns
- joint and muscle pain
- vaginal dryness or discomfort
- bladder (wee) problems

- dry or itchy skin
- weight gain around your stomach
- less sexual desire
- low mood and mood changes
- anxiety and depression.

In postmenopause, some menopause-related symptoms will ease. However, for some women symptoms can continue for years.

## Management and treatment

There are many things you can do to help relieve and manage symptoms. What works best for you will depend on your health, lifestyle and personal preferences.

### Healthy lifestyle changes

You might choose to try these everyday activities to improve your overall health and help you cope with some symptoms:

- stopping smoking and vaping
- limiting alcohol and caffeine intake
- improving your diet and maintaining a healthy weight
- putting in place good sleep routines
- being physically active
- looking after your mental health and wellbeing
- dressing in layers to help with hot flushes
- recording dates and reminders to help you feel on top of things.

### Treatment options

There is a range of evidence-based medical treatments for managing menopause-related symptoms. Talk to your doctor about treatments that might be suitable for you.

- Hormone treatments are prescription medicines, available in various forms, that add back some of the hormones that are declining in your body. This includes Menopausal Hormone Therapy (MHT) which can be a safe and effective treatment for hot flushes, night sweats and vaginal dryness.
- Non-hormonal treatments are prescription medicines that don't contain hormones and may help treat hot flushes, night sweats or mood changes.

There are also psychological therapies, such as Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT), and non-prescription medicines, such as paracetamol and ibuprofen, that might help reduce the impact of menopause-related symptoms.

