

# Glossary of Menopausal Terms

### Premenopause

Premenopause is when you have no symptoms of perimenopause or menopause. You still have periods – whether they're regular or irregular – and are considered to be in your reproductive years. Some hormonal changes may be occurring, but there are no noticeable changes in your body.

### Perimenopause

Perimenopause is the period leading up to menopause, when most symptoms are experienced. Oestrogen and progesterone levels are gradually declining, but periods continue, although they may come irregularly. Periods may also change to a very heavy period or an unusually light period, and this change lasts until the complete cessation of periods. Pregnancy is still possible during perimenopause.

### Menopause

Menopause is when you stop having periods (usually between 45 and 55 years old). This happens when your ovaries stop producing oestrogen and no longer release eggs. Menopause signifies the end of a woman's reproductive years and is generally considered complete after a woman hasn't had a period for 12 consecutive months. Once a woman reaches menopause, her ovaries have stopped releasing eggs and produce a minimal amount of oestrogen.

### Postmenopause

Postmenopause is the time after periods have stopped. Symptoms of menopause may have eased or stopped entirely, but some women continue to have symptoms for longer. There can be an increased risk of some health conditions, such as cardiovascular (heart) disease, osteoporosis (weak bones) and urinary tract infections (UTIs).

### Natural Menopause

This is the biological stage in life that occurs when hormones change and menstruation stops.

### Surgical Menopause

Occurs after an operation to remove an individual's ovaries, either on its own or at the same time as a hysterectomy. As the ovaries are the body's main source of oestrogen production, this could immediately trigger menopause, regardless of age. A hysterectomy, without the removal of ovaries, may lead to earlier menopause than if a hysterectomy had not been carried out.

### Induced Menopause

An injection or nasal spray is used to suppress hormones to make periods stop.

### Early or Premature Menopause

Also known as Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI). This is when menopause symptoms start before 45 years of age. This impacts 1% of women under 40 and 0.1% of women under 30.

### HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy)

There are different preparations and ways of giving it:

- Cyclical – in perimenopause when still having periods.
- Continuous – when postmenopausal and have had no periods for over a year or are over 54 years old.
- Oral – tablet.
- Patch, spray, or gel
- Vaginally – cream or tablet.

## Hormones:

- Oestrogen – A hormone produced in the ovaries, causes the release of eggs. Levels drop in the perimenopausal and menopausal stages which can cause hot flushes, night sweats and anxiety.
- Progesterone – A hormone which helps protect the lining of the womb for when a fertilised egg implants. The level of the hormone drops when no egg implants. Reduced levels of progesterone in perimenopause can lead to mood swings, depression, anxiety, headaches, and migraines.
- Testosterone – A hormone made in the ovaries and adrenal glands. It protects bones and muscles, and is a mood stabiliser. Levels drop in the perimenopausal stage which can result in fatigue, moodiness and irritability, loss of muscle strength, difficulty in concentration and memory.

## Contraception

Methods to prevent pregnancy. Pregnancy can still happen during perimenopause.

- If you are under 50 years of age, you should use contraception for at least 2 years following your last period.
- If you are over 50 years of age, you should use contraception for at least 1 year following your last period.

## Bone Density

How porous your bones are. The more space within the bone, the less dense it is. Less-dense bones are more likely to break.

## Osteoporosis

When your ovaries stop making oestrogen, your bones become thinner and you have a higher risk of osteoporosis, where your bones break more easily.

## Symptom Tracker

A diary of symptoms and dates of periods used to help diagnose menopause.

## Symptoms

The symptoms of perimenopause and menopause can be the same, and some symptoms will last longer.

### Most common symptoms:

- Hot flashes/flushes (a sudden feeling of heat in the upper body e.g. face, neck, and chest, that spreads upwards and downwards. In some cases, this becomes generalised, typically lasting 2-4 minutes, and can be associated with excessive sweating, palpitations, or anxiety)
- Night sweats
- Irregular Periods
- Loss of libido (sexual desire)
- Vaginal dryness
- Mood swings

### Pains:

- Breast pain
- Headaches
- Joint pain
- Burning tongue
- Electric shocks
- Digestive problems
- Gum problems
- Muscle tension
- Itchy skin
- Tingling in the hands and feet

## Changes:

- Fatigue (feeling tired)
- Hair loss
- Sleep disorders
- Difficulty concentrating
- Memory lapses
- Dizziness
- Weight gain
- Incontinence
- Bloating
- Allergies
- Brittle nails
- Changes in body odour
- Changes in taste
- Irregular heartbeat
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Panic disorder