LIKHA LOVE

# Understanding Menopause

A gentle, evidence-informed guide to the changes in your body and the support available to you.

**Menopause is your final menstrual period. It is confirmed after 12 consecutive months without a period, when there is no other medical explanation.**

## When does menopause happen?

In Australia, most women reach menopause between ages 45 and 55; the average age is 51. The transition is different for everyone. Some experience symptoms for years around their final period, while others have few or none.

## What is happening in your body?

As ovarian function changes, the ovaries stop releasing eggs and producing the hormones oestrogen and progesterone. Hormonal changes during the transition can affect sleep, mood, temperature regulation and many other aspects of health.

## Three terms to know

- Perimenopause: the time leading up to menopause, when hormone levels and periods may fluctuate.
- Menopause: the final period, identified retrospectively after 12 months without menstruation.
- Postmenopause: the years following the final period.

# Every experience is different

Symptoms can be physical, emotional or cognitive. You may have several, just one, or none at all.

## Commonly reported symptoms

- Hot flushes and night sweats
- Changes in sleep and difficulty sleeping
- Brain fog, including changes in concentration or memory
- Mood changes, low mood or anxiety
- Joint or muscle discomfort
- Dry or itchy skin
- Vaginal dryness, irritation or painful sex
- Bladder or urinary changes
- Changes in sexual desire and body-fat distribution

**You do not have to push through symptoms alone. If they are troubling you or affecting daily life, speak with a doctor about possible causes and support.**

## Early or medically induced menopause

Menopause before age 45 is considered early. Premature ovarian insufficiency (POI) occurs before age 40 and needs medical assessment. Menopause may also occur after some cancer treatments or surgery removing both ovaries. Removing the uterus alone does not necessarily cause menopause if the ovaries remain.

# Looking after yourself

Your needs and preferences matter. There are different ways to manage symptoms and protect your long-term health.

## Options to discuss with a healthcare professional

- Lifestyle and behavioural approaches, including activity and sleep routines
- Menopausal hormone therapy (MHT), also called HRT, when suitable
- Non-hormonal prescription medicines and other symptom-specific treatments
- Treatment for vaginal or bladder symptoms, including physical therapy where appropriate

## Supporting your health over time

Hormonal and age-related changes can affect bones, muscle, heart and metabolic health. Consider a balanced diet, weight-bearing and resistance exercise alongside aerobic movement, consistent sleep, avoiding smoking, and staying socially connected. Ask about recommended screening and checks, including blood pressure, cholesterol and bone health if you are at risk.

## Fertility and contraception

Pregnancy may still be possible during perimenopause. If you do not want to become pregnant, ask your clinician when it is safe to stop contraception.

## When to seek medical advice

See a doctor if symptoms concern you, interfere with daily life, or if you suspect menopause before age 45. Not every midlife symptom is caused by menopause; your clinician can assess other explanations and help you choose suitable care.

**A new chapter deserves care, understanding and support - not pressure to simply endure it.**

Source: Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, “Menopause” (updated 2 June 2026). health.gov.au/perimenopause/understanding/menopause

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