



Understanding Menopause

What is Menopause?

Menopause is the point in your life when you permanently stop having menstrual periods. After 1 year of having no periods, you've reached menopause. In most cases, menopause naturally happens around age 50. But everyone's body has its own timeline. You may stop having periods in your mid-40s. Or you might have them well into your 50s. Menopause may start earlier if it's caused by medicines, a procedure, or a disease.

Common Symptoms

- Hot flashes and night sweats
- Irregular periods
- Mood swings
- Feeling depressed or worried
- Trouble sleeping
- Vaginal dryness
- Problems with remembering or thinking clearly

Causes of Menopause

Normal changes in your body cause menopause. You start to ovulate less often. Your hormone levels fluctuate, causing changes in your periods. Over time, you stop ovulating and the levels of the hormone estrogen drop. This causes your menstrual cycle to stop.

Diagnosis and Treatment

Your age, your history of menstrual periods, and your symptoms will tell your doctor if you are near or at menopause. You likely won't need to be tested to see if you have started perimenopause or reached menopause. But if your doctor suspects another medical condition, you may have some tests.

Managing Menopause

Self-Care and Lifestyle Adjustments

- If you smoke, try to quit. If you can't quit, cut back as much as you can.
- Try to get regular exercise. It can also help keep your heart and bones strong and lift your mood.
- Limit caffeine and alcohol. This may help manage symptoms.
- Eat a heart-healthy diet. Choose foods like vegetables, fruits, nuts, beans, fish, and whole grains. Limit foods that have a lot of salt, fat, and sugar.
- Be sure you are getting enough calcium and vitamin D to help your bones stay strong. Eat foods that are rich in calcium. Ask your doctor if taking a supplement with calcium and vitamin D is right for you.
- Try to manage stress. Breathing exercises, meditation, or yoga may help.

Treatment Overview

If your symptoms are bothering you, there are treatments that can help.

Medicines may include:

- Hormonal birth control before menopause.
- Hormone therapy (HT).
- Antidepressants.
- Clonidine.
- Gabapentin

Other treatments that may help include cognitive behavioral therapy, hypnosis, and an over-the-counter vaginal lubricant.

Resources and Support

For more information, visit

KaiserPermanente.org or consult with your health care provider.



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