

5 minute guide: What is menopause?

Menopause is defined as a biological stage in a woman's life that occurs when hormones change and eventually menstruation stops. Usually it is defined as having occurred when they've not had a period for 12 consecutive months (for those reaching menopause naturally).

The average menopause age is 51, however it can be earlier naturally or due to surgery, illness or other reasons.

Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause when they may experience changes and menopausal symptoms. This can be years before menopause.

Postmenopause is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for 12 consecutive months and for the rest of her life. When we talk about menopause in this guidance, we are referring to any of these stages.

Managing menopause symptoms and long-term health

Managing menopause is a personal choice. Some prefer a natural approach, others a medical approach, or for some it can be a combination of the two. Benefits, risk and medical history also need to be taken into account.

What are the symptoms of menopause?

Hormonal changes can result in a wide range of symptoms, both physical and psychological. In research, the ones women have said affect them most at work include:

- Difficulty sleeping, insomnia or fatigue
- Hot flushes during the day or night
- Low mood, depression or changes in mood
- Nervousness, worry or anxiety
- Reduced ability to concentrate or focus
- Problems with memory recall
- Migraines or headaches
- Aches and pains
- Irregular and/or heavy periods
- Urinary issues, e.g. increased frequency

Talking to your GP

We always recommend you go to your GP if you're experiencing menopausal symptoms.

They can discuss options with you, including hormone replacement therapy (HRT), and advise on any lifestyle changes which could help. They should also be able to advise you on complementary treatments, including herbal remedies.

A little preparation will help you get the best from your appointment.

You could also record your symptoms and detail your menstrual cycle history. GPs use the [NICE guidelines](#) to help women manage their menopause - it's a good idea to read through these too.

Research the facts on up-to-date, trusted websites, and think about ways you would like to manage not just your menopause symptoms but your long-term health.

