

The menopause

The menopause is a natural part of ageing for women. Menopause is when a woman has her last period. It usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, although it can occur any time up to women's mid-60s. A premature menopause can occur, with periods stopping before the age of 40, either naturally or as an effect of a medical condition or its treatment. It is important to be aware that the menopause is a natural and temporary stage in women's lives and that not all women experience significant symptoms. However, around 30-60% of women experience intermittent physical and/or psychological symptoms during the menopause. These are associated with a decrease in the body's production of the hormone oestrogen. Symptoms on average continue for four years from the last period, and 1 in 10 women experience symptoms for up to 12 years.

Menopause is the process a woman goes through that causes her periods to end. It's a turning point, not a disease, but it can have a big impact on a woman's well-being. Although menopause can bring physical discomfort from hot flashes, night sweats, and other symptoms, it can also be the start of a new phase of a woman's life and an opportunity to guard against major health risks like heart disease and osteoporosis.

Tips for managing the menopause

- taking HRT – HRT can help to prevent osteoporosis, although this effect doesn't tend to last after treatment stops
- exercising regularly – including weight-bearing and resistance exercises. Active menopause is a must to help ward off weight gain and provide a mood boost
- eating a healthy diet that includes plenty of fruit, vegetables and sources of calcium, such as low-fat milk and yoghurt
- getting some sunlight – sunlight on your skin triggers the production of vitamin D, which can help to keep your bones strong
- stopping smoking and cutting down on alcohol
- taking calcium and/or vitamin D supplements if you don't feel you're getting enough of these – discuss this with your GP

For more information on the menopause

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>

<https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>

<https://www.daisynetwork.org/about-us/what-we-do/>

<https://healthtalk.org/menopause/overview>

<https://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/menopause/>

<http://www.menopause-exchange.co.uk/>

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23>