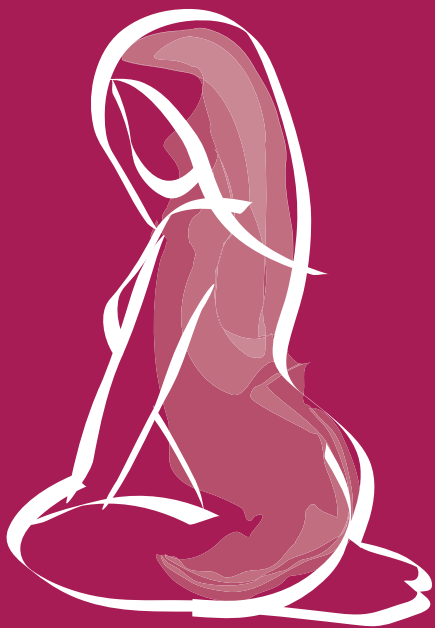


menopause

A NEW WOMAN EMERGES



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Introduction

Menopause is a natural transition in a woman's life when she stops menstruating and experiences hormonal changes in her body. It will affect the way she feels about herself and her relationships with loved ones. However, women need to understand that menopause is not a disease or a disorder but a normal biological change experienced by all women.

Not all women respond to menopause in the same way; some may be glad that their menstrual periods are soon coming to an end while others may feel disappointed that they are not able to have children anymore.

Some women regard menopause as an end, but you can treat it as a new beginning. The more you know about menopause, the better prepared you are to take care of yourself.

Understanding menopause is the first key to overcoming it. This booklet will give you a better understanding of its effects and symptoms, so you can enjoy a smooth transition into your menopausal years.

Understanding your body

Hormones

The endocrine glands in your body release chemical substances called hormones. They coordinate and control bodily functions like growth, development and sexual reproduction.

When you develop sexually, your ovaries release progesterone and estrogen, female sex hormones which are an integral part of your reproductive system:

PROGESTERONE

- Stimulates growth of the uterus lining for the fertilised egg to attach

ESTROGEN

- Stimulates breast development and genital maturity
- Strengthens the bones through calcium maintenance
- Regulates cholesterol level to prevent heart disease
- Keeps the vaginal lining moist and improves resilience to infection, enabling comfortable sexual activity

Hormones and the menstrual cycle

Your reproductive system is made up of ovaries, fallopian tubes, the uterus and the vagina.

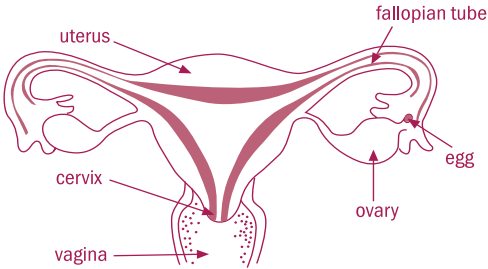


Fig 1.1. Picture of the female reproductive organ.

During your fertile years, menstruation takes place each month. Estrogen causes one egg to mature and releases it from the ovary. This is known as ovulation. The egg then passes through the fallopian tube and is now ready for fertilisation.

As you progress through life, the number of eggs in your ovaries gradually diminishes. As you approach your 40s, your ovaries become less productive and your hormone levels decline. The reduced amount of estrogen and progesterone disrupts your bodily functions. As a result, the pituitary gland steps in to stimulate the ovaries to produce these hormones.

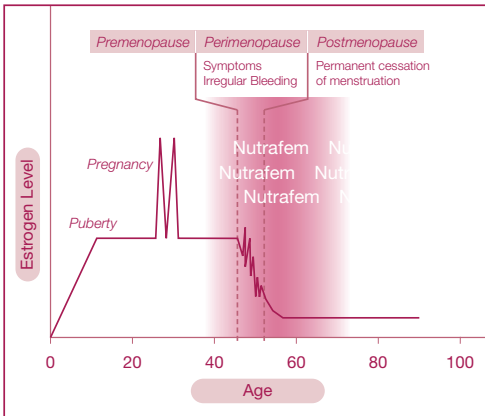
The simultaneous release of hormones from both the ovaries and pituitary gland may cause fluctuations in hormone levels and symptoms of discomfort may appear, signalling the start of menopause.

During menopause

Stages of menopause

Most women go through menopause approximately between the ages of 45-55. However, you may experience menopause differently and at varying times. The factors affecting menopause are:

- Genetic
- Habits such as smoking
- Pregnancy history
- Others (Surgery, Drug administration, Trauma)



PERIMENOPAUSE

Menopausal changes in your body do not occur suddenly and are usually pre-empted by a two to eight year period of fluctuating hormones. This stage usually takes place when a woman is around 45 years of age. During this phase, women may start to experience the physical, mental and emotional challenges of menopause

like irregular bleeding, tiredness and mood swings. Knowing and understanding what these symptoms are can help you cope better with the impact.

Type of change	Symptoms
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hot flashes (heat wave) • Night sweats • Vaginal dryness • Body aches • Joint pains • Changes in skin tone • Dizziness • Tiredness • Sleep disturbance
Mental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memory loss • Forgetfulness • Confusion • Difficulty in focusing and concentrating
Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mood swings • Anxiety • Irritability • Depression • Difficulty coping • Tearfulness
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced libido

MENOPAUSE

This is when a woman stops menstruating completely for 12 consecutive months and marks the end of her reproductive years. The average age for menopause is 51 years. You may still experience the symptoms of perimenopause as your body adjusts according to the new level of hormones.

POSTMENOPAUSE

Postmenopause are the years following menopause. This phase is established 12 months after menopause and most symptoms experienced during the perimenopause phase are reduced significantly. You may find greater acceptance for the changes in your life, and feel a greater sense of fulfillment as you devote more time to yourself and the things that matter to you.

DID YOU KNOW?

If someone in your family experiences menopause prematurely before the age of 40, it could happen to you too.

Premature menopause can also be caused by permanent ovarian failure or removal/damage of ovaries. Pre-menopausal women who have both their ovaries removed surgically usually experience an abrupt menopause and may be hit harder by menopausal symptoms. When only one ovary is removed, menopause usually occurs naturally. In hysterectomy where the uterus is removed, the woman stops menstruating but she may not experience menopause related symptoms immediately. When both the uterus and ovaries are removed, the woman will experience menopausal symptoms immediately.

Women who have undergone chemotherapy or radiation treatment for cancer face higher chances of premature menopause.

Symptoms and remedies

Identifying the symptoms of menopause can help reduce health problems later. Many women feel helpless or depressed during menopause. Try applying these simple yet effective remedies.

Hot Flashes/ Night Sweats

Cause Response of pituitary gland to the falling estrogen levels

- Remedy**
- Keep cool with the fan or air-conditioning
 - Dress in layers for easy removal when hot flashes strike
 - Keep a diary of hot flashes to identify timing and triggers
 - Avoid stressful situations
 - Take anti-oxidants and botanical supplements

Joint Pain

Cause Hormonal level changes

- Remedy**
- Take calcium or magnesium supplements
 - Take foods rich in omega-3
 - Try massages

Tiredness

Cause Loss of bodily fluids and disrupted sleep

- Remedy**
- Consume foods rich in vitamin B complex, potassium, magnesium, iron, iodine and chromium

Sleep Disturbance

Cause	Night sweats
Remedy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consume foods rich in melatonin like bananas, oats and tomatoes• Regular exercise• Comfortable sleeping environment with minimal noise and cool colours• Keep to a fixed bedtime• Relax before bedtime

Mood Swings

Cause	Fluctuating hormonal levels
Remedy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gain a deeper understanding of menopause and its changes• Communicate your frustrations with loved ones• Share your challenges, express your emotions• Join a support group

Vaginal Dryness

Cause	Reduced secretion of cervical mucus
Remedy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stay sexually active• Perform Kegel exercises• Use a lubricant

Memory Problem

Cause	Declining estrogen affecting memory function
Remedy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use your memory more often to sharpen your recall

Health risks

Estrogen contributes to the function of many organs. Therefore, the declining levels of hormones may pose certain health dangers. Here are some of the health risks you may face and the preventive measures you can take to minimise them.

DANGER 1: HEART DISEASE

The loss of estrogen seems to have a negative effect on women's circulatory systems thus stepping up the risk of heart disease. You can reduce the risks by making these simple lifestyle changes:

Stop Smoking Smoking increases the possibility of blood clot formation, irregular heart beat and coronary spasms. It also affects the lining of the arteries, causing them to narrow as cholesterol increases.

Maintain Optimal Weight Being overweight can increase your risks of heart disease. Regular exercise and a healthy diet will help maintain an ideal body weight.

Diabetes Check An individual is twice as likely to contract heart disease if they have a diabetic condition. Thus it is important to monitor one's blood glucose levels and maintain an ideal body weight.

Stress Control Stress is very unhealthy for the body. Keep stress levels low through relaxation techniques and hobbies.

DANGER 2: OSTEOPOROSIS

When estrogen production falls during menopause, women begin to lose bone strength and density dramatically. Bones become brittle and fragile, fracturing easily. These are some ways to minimise risk:

Maintain A Healthy Diet Eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables and drink more water. Increase your calcium intake to about 1000 to 1500 mg per day to help build and maintain healthy bones.

Exercise Regularly Regular exercise will help to increase bone mass and promote bone growth. Include weight bearing and resistive exercises in your daily activities to improve flexibility and coordination. Weight bearing exercises are those in which the bones and muscles work against gravity; such as jogging, walking, stair-climbing and dancing. Resistive exercises such as weight lifting involves muscular strength to improve muscle mass and strengthen bone.

Drink Less Alcohol High alcohol consumption has been linked to poor absorption of calcium. It also interferes with the liver's ability to use vitamin D.

Managing menopause

Hormone Replacement Therapy

At the menopausal stage, a woman's body produces less estrogen and progesterone which can cause symptoms and discomfort. Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) replaces these hormones in the body and aims to counter these symptoms. The synthetic estrogen or combined estrogen and progesterone hormones found in HRT are usually prescribed in the form of tablets, skin patches, vaginal preparations and implants.

Although HRT is the most common medical treatment, it is not meant for everyone. Women who have a history of cancer, experienced vaginal bleeding or blood clotting problems are advised against HRT. Those who are susceptible may also experience some side-effects of the therapy, which include skin irritation, bloating, nausea and headaches.

In The Women's Health Initiative Hormone Trial conducted by The Women's Health Initiative in the United States, HRT was found to be associated with notable increases in the risk of stroke, heart disease, thrombosis and breast cancer. It is advisable to consult a healthcare professional before starting on HRT.

Other than HRT, women can still seek help from alternative remedies to help relieve menopausal symptoms.

Alternative Remedies

Botanical products from natural sources are popular in the field of relieving menopausal symptoms. Certain plants contain phytoestrogens which are similar to our bodies' estrogens and therefore assist in easing the symptoms caused by the loss of estrogens.

Note: When taking any supplement, it is important to incorporate it gradually into your diet. Botanical supplements can be effective treatments because of their natural ingredients. However, some may cause side effects. Consult a healthcare professional to find out if the supplement is suitable and the appropriate dosage for consumption.

Nutrafem – the natural choice in menopause management

This is a natural botanical supplement for menopausal women. Made from botanical extracts, Nutrafem is designed to help the body to use its own estrogens more effectively. Nutrafem has been clinically proven to be safe and effective in the management of menopausal symptoms.



Nutrafem by Bionutra.

SAFE Nutrafem has been clinically tested to be safe and non-toxic.

NATURAL The natural botanical extracts of Nutrafem are derived from *Vigna radiata beans* and *Eucommia ulmoides bark*. These beans and bark have been routinely consumed by many generations of Asian families.

EFFECTIVE Nutrafem works by assisting the body to use its own estrogens more effectively. Thus your body gets what it only needs.

REMEDIAL Women who consume Nutrafem regularly are likely to experience a lower incidence of menopausal related symptoms.

MAINTENANCE Nutrafem helps to maintain bone health by facilitating calcium absorption.

SUPPORTIVE Nutrafem contains anti-oxidants that can support body processes as well as combat damaging effects of free radicals and promote optimal skin conditions.

ENHANCEMENT Nutrafem's proprietary blend of extracts enhances the performance of various bodily functions, helping you sleep better and increasing energy levels.

“Nutrafem empowers every woman to feel and look great even in her mature years.”

Keeping healthy

Diet

A balanced diet that includes carbohydrates, proteins, fats and fibre, and packed with minerals and vitamins, is very important during menopause. Minerals are vital for healthy bones and normal cell function. Vitamins help drive cellular activity, producing more energy.

Menopausal women are recommended to eat foods that are rich in vitamin C, E and calcium. Choose dairy products which are low in fat but high in calcium to improve bone health. Foods which are rich in phytoestrogens are also beneficial.

Drinking plenty of water and having regular meals helps to stabilise blood sugar levels. Maintaining a healthy diet will not only help women to manage menopausal symptoms better, but will also contribute to better health.

Regular Exercise

Exercise improves blood circulation, enabling more nutrients and oxygen to reach your cells. It also helps to strengthen bones, relieve stress and promote sleep.

Try to exercise at least three times a week, one hour for each session. For a balanced workout, include aerobic, weight-bearing and stretching exercises into your exercise routine.

Regular exercise may gradually strengthen the lungs, digestive tract, nervous system, and control body fat; thus decelerating the aging process. It also helps individuals to cope better with stress in their everyday lives.

Exercise does not have to be boring. Check out your local community centre for interesting activities like dance, yoga and aerobics. It is also a great way to socialise.

KEGEL EXERCISE

Kegel exercise is an effective method of countering incontinence by strengthening the pelvic muscles. In addition it can also enhance sexual satisfaction. Kegel exercises are not hard to do at all, women just need to contract their pelvic floor muscles for a second and release it completely. Repeat 10 times for each set. For a more effective result, do up to 20 sets a day. Not only is it simple, but this exercise can be done anywhere and at any time. It can be done in the bus, in the car, while waiting in line at the supermarket or even in the shower.

I DON'T KNOW WHERE MY PELVIC MUSCLES ARE!

Try to stop the flow of urine the next time you visit the bathroom. The muscles you contract are your pelvic muscles.

Stress

Many women experience emotional changes during menopause due to a dip in hormone levels. Thus, it is very important to have effective stress management strategies.

Eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly and getting enough rest are simple ways to overcome stress. Prioritise your tasks so you will not be overwhelmed. Stop and relax after continuous hours of work. A walk along the beach, a spa session or a good book are great ways to relax your mind. Confide in a close friend or a professional counsellor. And most importantly, listen to your body.

Conclusion

We hope this booklet has helped you to understand more about the symptoms and effects of menopause, as well as the best ways to manage during this period. By adopting a holistic approach towards menopause and enjoying the natural benefits of Nutrafem, you can look forward to new beginnings.

For more information, please contact our
Customer Care Centre
email to customercare@nutrafem.com.au

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