

# HORMONES AND MENOPAUSE

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The endocrine system is a network of glands and organs that produce, store, and secrete hormones. Sometimes called “the change,” **menopause** is the time, around age 50, when a woman’s ovaries produce fewer hormones and she stops having a monthly period. Menopause takes place gradually over four or five years. Symptoms can occur more abruptly, such as if you have your ovaries removed. There are challenges in menopause. But by staying strong and active, you’ll find that some of the best years of your life are still ahead.

### MENOPAUSE FACTS

The changes of menopause begin when your ovaries no longer produce eggs, and produce fewer female hormones. Two of these hormones, **estrogen** and **progesterone**, help regulate your monthly period. They are also called sex hormones. Your **ovaries** produce these hormones.

### 3 STAGES OF MENOPAUSE

1. **Perimenopause:** When hormone levels first start to change, menstrual cycles become irregular, and hot flashes may begin. For many women, perimenopause can begin as early as at 40, but on average, it starts around age 47.
2. **Menopause:** When ovaries stop making hormones and your menstrual periods stop. Typically occurs around the age 51.
3. **Postmenopause:** Has begun once a woman has gone a full year without a menstrual period.

**EARLY MENOPAUSE** is triggered by a hysterectomy or surgical removal of the ovaries, although it can also be genetic or brought on by other medical conditions or treatments, such as chemotherapy for cancer.

### COMMON SYMPTOMS

Some women sail through menopause with only a few symptoms, while others experience them all. These may occur during any or all stages of menopause, from **perimenopause** to **postmenopause**:

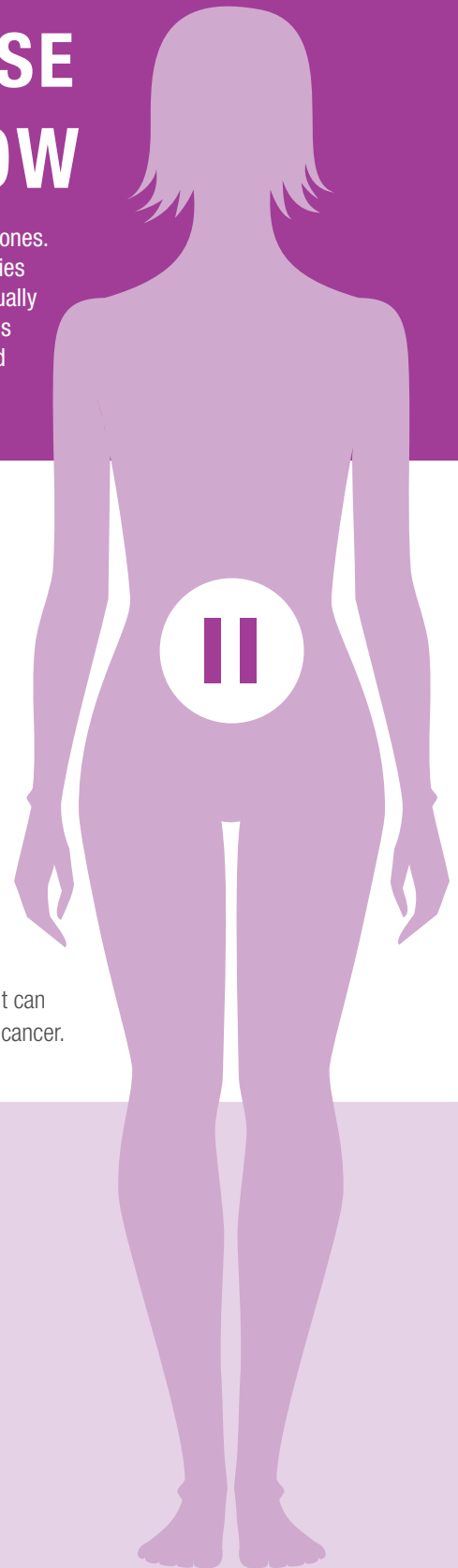
- Irregular periods
- Hot flashes and night sweats
- Mood changes
- Insomnia and sleep issues.
- Vaginal and bladder problems
- Fatigue
- Heart palpitations
- Crawling skin
- Joint aches
- Body changes (weight gain)
- Hair and skin changes
- Forgetfulness
- Changes in sexual desire

Visit [hormone.org/menopausemap](http://hormone.org/menopausemap) for more information.

Additional Editing by Nanette F. Santoro, MD,  
*University of Colorado School of Medicine*



Hormone Health  
NETWORK®  
*Keep your body in balance*





**Hormone depletion matters because estrogen and progesterone also affect your reproductive tract, urinary tract, heart and blood vessels, bones, breasts, skin, hair, mucus membranes, pelvic muscles, and brain.**

## DID YOU KNOW?

Perimenopausal women have one of the highest rates of unplanned pregnancies of any age group, even though pregnancies are rare. Menopause takes place once you've had a year since your last period, and you can get pregnant until then.



**6,000**

An estimated 6,000 women in the US reach menopause every day.

**46**  
Million

By the year 2020, the number of women who will be older than 55 is estimated to be 46 million.

**40%**

With an increasing life expectancy, women will spend up to 40% of their lives postmenopausal.

*Source: The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists*

## DIAGNOSIS

If you've missed your period for three months in a row, it's time to talk with your health care provider. Together, you may decide on a treatment plan, especially if you're having menopausal symptoms that are affecting your quality of life.

## TREATMENT

No matter how you experience menopausal symptoms or which ones you have, there are very good ways to treat them. Because you are unique, your symptoms will be unique and your treatment will be unique.

Hormone replacement therapy may be right for you. This is a decision that you and your health care provider can make together.



### TIPS FOR STAYING HEALTHY

- Eat a healthy diet
- Don't smoke
- Get regular exercise
- Get enough calcium

## 4 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR

- Is hormone replacement therapy right for me?
- Are there non-prescription (over-the-counter) treatments that might help?
- What are some other ways to treat my menopausal symptoms?
- What are the risks and benefits of my treatment options?



**Patients have questions. We have answers.**

The Hormone Health Network is your trusted source for endocrine patient education. Our free Menopause Map™ My Personal Path is available at [hormone.org/menopause-map](http://hormone.org/menopause-map).



Hormone Health  
NETWORK®  
FROM THE ENDOCRINE SOCIETY