

Menopause  
care



# Menopause care guidebook



moda  
HEALTH

# (Peri)+menopause is worth talking about.

You deserve the help you need to manage your symptoms. And you are not alone!

(Peri)+menopause can be a tricky time to navigate. It can bring unexpected challenges and symptoms that may start earlier than expected. It can be one of the most frustrating health experiences you will go through. Some feel societal pressure to not talk about it. But we say, no more!

Your team at Moda Health is here to support you on your menopause journey. This guidebook is your reminder that menopause is normal, and your symptoms are treatable. Discover what to expect, find ways to advocate for yourself and take charge of your health.

As helpful as we hope this guide will be, everyone's menopause is unique, and we can't cover everything. That's why we encourage you to work closely with your healthcare providers. If you don't understand something or have a question, they can help explain it. Your Moda Health coach is also here to offer guidance and support.



Feel **seen, supported, and in control** of your journey

## What's inside

<b>Overview</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Questions to ask</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Symptom-specific tips</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Prevention and wellness</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Sources</b>	<b>16</b>

Are you ready? (Spoiler alert: You've got this!) [➤](#)

# Overview

men·o·pause /'menə,pôz/

The absence of menstrual periods for 1 year.

It sounds so simple. But this 8-word definition doesn't capture the complexity of menopause and the impact it can have.

To understand menopause and its different stages, let's revisit what an average menstrual cycle is like. Before menopause, a cycle typically lasts from 24 to 38 days, with active bleeding from 3 to 8 days. During your cycle, your hormone levels likely follow a consistent pattern, increasing and decreasing throughout.

All that starts to change once your body enters perimenopause and your cycles start to fluctuate. Identifying the patterns of your typical cycle is your first step.

Once you set that baseline, you can track changes as you progress through each stage and communicate them to your provider.

The changes you experience during menopause may be unexpected, sudden and will certainly be unique to you. They can impact your physical and mental health, and your relationships. There is no standard treatment of symptoms. But there are numerous options that can be adjusted to work for you through your menopause journey.

[Stages of menopause at a glance >](#)



You deserve menopause care that relieves symptoms and frees you to do more of what you love.

0	<b>Premenopause</b> The time before you enter perimenopause, when you still have regular periods. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Average ages: Pre-teen through 40s</li><li>• Estrogen and progesterone fluctuate normally</li></ul>
1	<b>Perimenopause</b> When you start to transition into menopause because of irregular ovulation and a reduction in hormones. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Average age: 40s</li><li>• Duration: 4 to 8 years</li></ul>
2	<b>Menopause</b> When your ovaries stop releasing eggs, your estrogen and progesterone drop significantly and you've gone 12 consecutive months without a menstrual period. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Average age: 51</li><li>• Duration: 1 year</li></ul>
3	<b>Postmenopause</b> The time after you've completed menopause, when you are no longer ovulating and can no longer get pregnant. Some people still experience symptoms. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Average age: 52</li></ul>

[3 main stages of menopause >](#)



# Perimenopause

Typical age: 45 to 55 Duration: 3 to 5 years

Perimenopause is when your hormone levels start to change. Your ovaries produce less estrogen and progesterone, which are what regulate your periods. Instead of consistently adjusting up and down during your cycle, your hormone levels become unpredictable. It's a slow, often unnoticeable change, which is why you may not immediately realize you're in perimenopause.





### What's changing in your body

- The ovaries begin to make less estrogen
- Some months, the ovaries may not release an egg
- Your periods may be shorter or longer
- The number of days between periods may increase or decrease
- Your bleeding may become heavier or lighter
- You may skip periods

### Symptoms

Because the changes occurring within your body happen slowly, you may not realize that certain symptoms are related to menopause. Everyone is different and every perimenopause is different. You may experience some symptoms or not notice any at all.

Common symptoms:


	Hot flashes and night sweats		Vaginal dryness
	Lack of interest in sex		Bladder leakage

### When to see your provider

While most changes to your period during perimenopause are normal, sometimes a change in bleeding is a sign of a health problem. Talk to your provider if any of your perimenopause symptoms are disrupting your life, and especially if:

- You have bleeding or spotting between periods
- You have bleeding or spotting after sex
- You have bleeding that is heavier than usual
- Your periods occur very close together

There are many causes of abnormal bleeding, which your provider can discuss with you.



# Menopause

Average age: 51 Duration: 1 year

Perimenopause is a gradual process that can take several years. Menopause itself is complete when you go 12 consecutive months without having a period.

## What's changing in your body

- Your ovaries stop producing estrogen and progesterone
- Your ovaries stop regularly releasing an egg each month
- You stop having periods

## When to see your provider

It's important to track your symptoms and keep your provider notified when things change, as many menopause symptoms can be related to other conditions. It can be a confusing, frustrating time. But your provider is there to help you identify the cause of your symptoms and create a treatment plan that works for you.

## Symptoms

In fact, discussing your symptoms is your first step in better managing your menopause. And although these symptoms are common, they may show up differently for you. Which is why you should speak with your provider when new symptoms occur.

### Common symptoms:



Hot flashes and night sweats



Elevated heart rate



Vaginal dryness



Bladder control issues



Thinning hair



Trouble concentrating



Trouble sleeping



Mood swings, sadness and anxiety



Memory problems



Dry, itchy skin



Headaches



Weight gain



## Postmenopause

Typical age: 52 or older

Postmenopause covers the years after you've gone through menopause. You are no longer ovulating and your hormone levels are consistently lower.

### What's changing in your body

- You no longer have periods
- You can no longer get pregnant
- There's an increased risk of osteoporosis
- There's an increased risk of heart disease

### Symptoms

It's important to know that this new chapter may come with new symptoms, or a continuation of some of the symptoms you've experienced in other phases. Many symptoms may lessen or stop completely. Continue to track your symptoms and changes in your body and keep your doctor up to date. If things shift and you need new treatment, you can advocate for yourself with the confidence of your previous experiences.

#### Common symptoms:



Hot flashes and night sweats



Weight gain



Memory problems



Vaginal and urinary symptoms

### When to see your provider

See your provider regularly to monitor your bone and heart health. It's especially important to see your provider if you experience bleeding post menopause.

Things to keep in mind >

## Things to keep in mind

### Surgical menopause

Sometimes, menopause begins because a person has their ovaries removed during surgery. If, during surgery, only the uterus is removed, they will stop having periods, but their body will not go through surgical menopause because their ovaries will still impact hormone levels and release eggs. Those people will experience menopause during the average time frames mentioned throughout the guide.

### How is menopause diagnosed?

Although it's not required to obtain an official diagnosis of menopause to begin receiving treatment, your doctor can order a blood test if you'd like to confirm it. The test checks for your estrogen levels and a follicle-stimulating hormone. Because your hormone levels fluctuate, the accuracy of your results might be affected, depending on when the test was done. This is often done to diagnose early menopause and rule out other concerns like thyroid issues.

### Hot flashes

If there's one symptom that most people are aware of when it comes to menopause, it's probably hot flashes. Too often, it's joked about. But if you've ever experienced a hot flash or night sweats you know it's not funny. A hot flash often starts as a feeling of warmth from your chest to your head, coming in waves. You may sweat and you may turn red during the hot flash. Some feel dizzy and nauseous, and it may be paired with a headache or an increase in heart rate.

They are the most common symptoms of perimenopause and menopause and many feel they are the most disruptive. Sleeplessness, mood changes and managing comfort throughout the day can really impact your life.

The good news is that there are treatments, like hormone replacement therapy, and tips and tricks, like keeping a personal fan within reach at all times, that can help you push through the hot flash and carry on with your day. Because this is an ever-evolving field, we encourage you to check with your provider if there are any new medications that may support you and your symptoms.

### Reclaiming your sex life

If you've experienced pain during sex, dry, thinning skin may be part of the problem. The dry skin you may experience during and after menopause includes the skin of your vagina and the surrounding area. This happens because the skin gets thinner and your vagina can't produce as much wetness (also called lubrication) during sex.

You deserve to enjoy sex without the fear of pain, and there are over-the-counter and prescription treatments available. Talk to your doctor about which is right for you.

#### Over-the-counter treatments

- Water-based sexual lubricant (e.g., K-Y Jelly)
- Vaginal moisturizers (e.g., Vagisil)

#### Prescription treatments

Estrogen cream, which is absorbed into your bloodstream through your skin, has the same side-effects as HRT and may interact with other medications you're taking and should always be discussed with a provider. It's also important to note that the low dosage means the estrogen in this form won't help with hot flashes or provide protection against osteoporosis, like the pill form does.

### Menopause and your oral health

Like so many health conditions, sometimes the symptoms show up first in your mouth. You may notice dryness, pain or a tingling sensation. When estrogen level drops, you are at increased risk for:

- Dry mouth
- Gum disease
- Receding gum line
- Tooth decay
- Tooth loss

Talk to your dentist about menopause and your oral health. More frequent dental cleanings and exams may help reduce the impact, and a regular home oral care plan can help keep your teeth and mouth healthy.

# Questions to ask

## What to ask your provider about (Peri)+menopause

Start by sharing any new symptoms you are experiencing, however small and even if you're not sure if they are connected to menopause.

- 1 Based on my current symptoms, I think I am going through menopause. What do you think?
- 2 Could my irregular periods be caused by something other than menopause?
- 3 What are my options for treating my symptoms, so I can feel more comfortable?
- 4 What supplements or herbal treatments should I consider?
- 5 What changes should I make to my diet and exercise routine?
- 6 Is hormone replacement therapy a treatment that we should try?
- 7 What are the risks and benefits of hormone replacement therapy?
- 8 What other health conditions should we be watching for? Heart disease? Bone health?
- 9 Do I need to take any tests?

## Medical treatments

There are several options for treatment of the symptoms of menopause. Talk to your provider about which are right for you and be sure to share with them any side effects that you experience, even if you're not sure if they are connected to menopause.

### Hormone replacement therapy (HRT)

HRT can help with multiple menopause symptoms, including memory and concentration issues, hot flashes and night sweats, vaginal dryness and hair loss, urinary issues, bone issues and heart health. Some studies have also shown that HRT can help protect your heart, protecting against heart attacks. The most benefit was seen in women under 60 years of age who start HRT within 10 years of reaching menopause.

Depending on your needs and your medical history, your provider may prescribe estrogen only, or estrogen plus progestin, which is a type of progesterone that's created in a lab. These treatments are available in pill form, as skin patches, rings, implants, or gels and creams.

HRT can come with risks, including stroke and cancer, so it's important to discuss these risks and the benefits with your provider.

### Birth control

During perimenopause, birth control pills can help with heavy periods or periods that are very close together.

### SSRI and SNRIs

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) and selective serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs) are typically used for depression, but at low doses they can also help with night sweats and hot flashes.

### Urinary medications

There are several medications that can help with bladder control issues if other treatments aren't helping.

# Symptom-specific tips

## Racing heart

If you experience a fast heart rate, you can make the following changes to help your body:

- Reduce stress and anxiety
- Limit salt, alcohol, caffeine and nicotine
- Stay hydrated

## Hot flashes

To address and reduce the impact of hot flashes, try avoiding spicy food, alcohol and smoking. Maintaining a healthy weight can help lessen the impact of hot flashes.

Some practical, day-to-day tips include:

- Dressing in layers, so you can add or remove clothing based on your comfort level
- Carrying a portable fan when away from home for quick relief on the go
- Placing an icepack under your pillow and flipping it to the cool side, for quick relief through the night
- Using a gel-filled cooling mat

## Mood changes

If menopause-induced depression, irritability and anxiety are disrupting your life, you may want to talk with a professional therapist and consider physical activities to improve your mood and reduce stress.

## Concentration and memory

Keep your brain on its toes with fun activities like sudoku, trivia night, learning a new hobby, language or putting your library card to use.

## Sleep troubles

Insomnia and trouble maintaining sleep can be one of the most disruptive symptoms of menopause, also affecting your mood, memory and overall health. Try going to bed the same time every night, and consider making a few changes, like:

- Wearing loose, cotton pajamas
- Lowering the temperature in the bedroom overnight
- Using fans to keep the air moving

- Wear earplugs to reduce distractions
- Keep pets and items off the bed
- Avoid daytime naps
- Exercise regularly
- Eat meals at regular times
- Avoid late-night meals
- Limit caffeine and spicy food
- Avoid alcohol, which may cause you to wake up through the night

## Bladder problems

Problems with your urinary tract may be a part of some or all of your menopause. When estrogen levels are low, it impacts your urethra and bladder. Working with a physical therapist who specializes in pelvic floor retraining and relaxation can give you the knowledge and exercises you can do at home to strengthen your pelvic floor. You can also consider limiting caffeine and alcohol. Both can contribute to urinary issues.

## Vaginal dryness and painful sex

Changes in estrogen levels causes vaginal dryness, which can worsen with lack of sexual activity. So if you're avoiding sex because of the pain you experience, your vaginal dryness may worsen. There are several ways to address vaginal dryness at home:

- Over-the-counter, short-acting vaginal lubricants and moisturizers, which reduce friction when applied before sex
- Vaginal estrogen, which can thicken your vaginal lining
- Long-acting vaginal lubricants, applied every one to three days to stick to the vaginal lining and help retain moisture

## Hair loss

To help stave off hair loss, make sure your diet includes enough protein, iron, vitamin C and vitamin B. Prenatal vitamins and a low dose of iron can help too. Talk to your doctor about your options.



# Prevention and wellness

Many menopause symptoms can improve by making some adjustments to your daily habits. Through lifestyle changes, nutrition, and exercise, you may experience some relief from the more disruptive symptoms.

## Nutrition and menopause

Choosing healthy, balanced meals helps with most health conditions, and menopause is no different. In particular, it's important to protect and strengthen your bones by keeping up with adequate amounts of calcium, vitamin D and protein. Talk to your provider about the right amounts for you and your body. But your food choices can impact other menopause symptoms, like hair loss and hot flashes.

One exception is black cohosh, a flower that's in the buttercup family. Studies have shown that the root of the plant is effective as a dietary supplement to reduce menopause symptoms like hot flashes. It is also sometimes used for period cramps and PMS. If you're considering trying this or any other natural supplement, be sure to discuss it with your provider first. There may be side effects from long-term use and interactions with your existing medications.

won't help with hot flashes or provide protection against osteoporosis, like the pill form does.

## Herbal supplements

So far, there is little research on how effective supplements and herbs are in treating menopause symptoms. There's also little evidence of the safety of using these supplements long term.



## Keep it moving

There are many menopause symptoms that regular exercise can improve, including slowing bone loss, improving mental health and helping with sleep. When you include strength training and balance training, you're taking steps to protect your bones by strengthening your muscles and lowering the risk of falls, which could lead to broken bones.

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