

M E N O P A U S E

What is menopause?

Menopause is the time in a woman's life when her menstrual periods permanently cease for a minimum of 12 consecutive months. As a woman's ovaries no longer produce an egg every month and her hormonal production declines, her menstrual periods stop. This is sometimes referred to as the "change of life".

What are the common symptoms of menopause?

- Hot flashes
- Vaginal dryness
- Night sweats
- Sleepless nights
- Depression
- Reduced libido
- Loss of enjoyment of sex
- Increased incidence of urinary incontinence
- Vaginal atrophy
- Frequent urination
- Cessation of periods

Is having a hysterectomy the best menopause treatment? Or is it a menopause treatment at all?

Surgical menopause occurs when a woman undergoes a hysterectomy. All too often, physicians view this as the only option for menopause treatment. Unlike natural menopause, surgically induced menopause causes an immediate decline in progesterone, estrogen, and testosterone production, rather than the natural gradual decline that occurs in these hormones over the years. As a result, a woman will feel a dramatic change in her body as she experiences the symptoms of rapid hormonal decline.

Even if the ovaries have been spared the surgeon's knife, ovarian dysfunction or atrophy commonly occurs within two years following removal of the uterus, causing a predictable decline in hormone levels. This can occur because even though you still have your ovaries in place, the blood supply to the ovaries may be compromised by the removal of the uterus and fallopian tubes.

What factors can cause early menopause?

Anything that damages the ovaries or the blood supply to the ovaries causing premature ovarian failure can lead to early menopause, such as a tubal ligation. There is also the possibility that the ovaries can be damaged during the

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actual hysterectomy surgical procedure, which can negatively affect their function, as well.

Chemical induced menopause can occur from chemotherapy, radiation and drugs such as tamoxifen, although it is possible that ovarian function may return after the chemical treatment has been stopped.

Other factors that can lead to early menopause are poor nutrition, a history of smoking, anorexia, or a traumatic experience.

What is perimenopause?

Perimenopause occurs when a woman's body begins to exhibit the hormonal changes that lead into menopause. The symptoms of perimenopause can begin many years before a woman's period permanently stops. It can occur in your 40s, and even in your 30s. Some of the symptoms of perimenopause are irregular periods, heavy bleeding, poor sleep, hot flashes, hair loss, weight gain, loss of libido, headaches, dry eyes, vaginal changes, and emotional distress. As mentioned previously, oftentimes a hysterectomy is suggested at this point by conventional physicians and as we've discussed, this is not your only option for menopause treatment.

What happens to a woman's hormones during menopause?

While both estrogen and progesterone levels decline with age, progesterone declines much more dramatically. During menopause, a woman's progesterone level is likely to be a mere 1/120th of the level she experienced in her early twenties. When a woman does not ovulate, her ovaries produce no progesterone at all.

Women produce the natural estrogen, estradiol, in adequate amounts until they approach menopause, when estradiol and the other naturally occurring estrogens decline. This decline leads to the symptoms associated with perimenopause and often begins the search for menopause treatment.

A woman's postmenopausal estrogen level may remain at 40 percent of the level she experienced in early adulthood, because even when her ovaries no longer produce estrogen, her fat cells continue to do so. Thanks to this additional source of estrogen, an obese postmenopausal woman may have higher estrogen levels than a thin premenopausal woman.

When women undergo a total hysterectomy, with the removal of their ovaries, they also immediately lose 50 percent of their circulating testosterone, as well.

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What solutions do conventional doctors offer to women for the symptoms of menopause and menopause treatment?

Conventional doctors typically will offer synthetic hormone drugs such as Premarin and Prempro as menopause treatment. They will also commonly offer antidepressants, anti-anxiety and sleep medications, none of which resolve the underlying cause of her symptoms and have many adverse side effects.

What are the natural solutions for menopause treatment?

Contrary to what you may hear, hysterectomy and counterfeit hormones such as Premarin and Prempro are not the only menopause treatment options a woman has before her. Since the underlying cause of the symptoms of menopause is a decline in the natural hormones, the best menopause treatment begins with replenishing a woman's body with bioidentical estrogen, progesterone, testosterone will help restore her back to good health.