

What is Menopause?

Menopause is the natural process when a woman's hormones begin to decline and she is no longer fertile. This usually happens when a woman is in her 40s and 50s. Menopause officially starts 12 months after a woman's last menstrual period. But symptoms may start before, during what we call perimenopause. Menopause can also occur if you have your ovaries removed. Also, some chemotherapy and radiation can cause menopause.



WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE?

Women in or nearing menopause may experience a multitude of different symptoms including:

- Irregular periods
- Vaginal dryness
- Mood disruption or changes
- Disruption of sleep
- Hot flashes
- Hair loss
- Skin dryness
- Weight gain
- Mental foginess

HOW CAN I TREAT THE SYMPTOMS OF MENOPAUSE? LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Exercise regularly. Both aerobic and weight training exercises are important. Aerobic helps maintain a healthy weight and heart and could help with mood and sleep. Weight bearing exercises and lifting help with osteoporosis. Try to exercise at least 150 minutes a week.

Eat healthy. Eating a diet high in fruits and vegetables and low in saturated fats can help you maintain a healthy weight. It can also keep your heart and other organs healthy. This is especially important during menopause.



Quit smoking. Smoking can cause menopause symptoms to happen early and can make them worse. It also increases your risk for heart disease, osteoporosis, cancer and other diseases.

Reduce stress. Reducing stress and practicing relaxation can help with some menopause symptoms like anxiety and sleep problems. There are many ways to relax like yoga, meditation, breathing exercises, guided imagery and more.

Get enough sleep.

Being well rested is important for reducing stress and improving focus. If you have trouble sleeping, make sure you exercise regularly. This can help improve sleep especially during menopause

Learn techniques to prevent and treat hot flashes.

Many things can trigger hot flashes. Some triggers include hot drinks and food, caffeine, alcohol and stress. Try to find out what triggers your hot flashes and avoid them. Other ways to help with hot flashes include:

- Dress in layers
- Sleep in a cool place with airy sheets
- Have a cool beverage if you feel like a hot flash is starting

HERBAL MEDICINES AND NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS

Specific foods or nutritional supplements that have demonstrated help with hot flashes of menopause include: Whole soy products like tofu, soybeans and soymilk and ground flaxseed 2-4 tablespoons a day. Black Cohosh (20-40 mg twice a day), an herbal supplement, can improve menopausal symptoms. Make sure to talk to your healthcare professional before starting any new supplements to make sure they are right for you.

INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE THERAPIES

You can use in combination with the above techniques.

Meditation. Meditation is a practice of focusing and calming the mind. There are different ways to meditate but it may help decrease hot flashes in menopause.

Acupuncture. This is a traditional Chinese treatment that has been effective for hot flashes and can reduce other symptoms of menopause. Acupuncture uses thin needles in the skin by a trained practitioner to target specific points on your skin. While it may cause some discomfort, it generally is not painful.

For more information, scan the QR code below, or visit nciph.org/menopause



