MENOPAUSE

What is menopause ?

Menopause describes the changes women go through as they gradually stop menstruating and enter the post-reproductive period of life. It is a normal transition and it marks the beginning of a new phase of a woman's life.

When does menopause happen ?

There are three stages of menopause which usually last up to 10 years or more.

PERI-MENOPAUSE

Usually starts in your mid to late 40s, when your ovaries gradually produce less sex hormones, and is often described as the transition phase of Menopause. It usually lasts 3-5 years, but may last up to 10 years.

During this time, hormone production can fluctuate, particularly Oestrogen and Progesterone, and periods become less regular.

MENOPAUSE

The average age for menopause is 51 and it is characterised by 12 months without menstruation.

This is when the body ceases production of the hormone oestrogen.

POST MENOPAUSE

In the years following menopause the symptoms may begin to ease, but there are some new health considerations to be aware of, such as osteoporoses and heart disease.

Early onset of menopause may be caused by genetics, cancer therapy, surgical removal of the ovaries, autoimmune disorders and Premature Ovarian Failure.

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Common Symptoms

Menopause is an individual experience, symptoms and their intensity will vary person to person. Changing oestrogen levels are the main cause of menopausal symptoms, hormone balance is very important to a woman's feeling of well-being.

Too much oestrogen and you may experience:

- Over-heating
- Weight gain
- Fatigue
- Breast tenderness
- Poor sleep
- Irregular periods
- Sugar cravings
- Bloating
- Irritability

Not enough Oestrogen and you may experience:

- Depression/anxiety
- Night sweats
- Hot flushes
- Painful intercourse
- Low libido
- Headaches
- Memory loss or foggy head
- Low moods
- Insomnia
- Low energy
- Light or no period
- Vaginal dryness or itchiness
- Collagen loss & sagging skin
- Aching muscles & joints
- Recurring Infections
- Bladder Leakage

Treatment Options

The most common treatments are listed below but it is important to note that any treatment should only be commenced in consultation with your doctor and some of the more “natural” options are still being researched to determine effectiveness.

- **Vaginal laser treatment (GynaeLase)**
  For improving skin thickness, tightness and lubrication of the vagina. This is a quick, safe, painless, long-lasting and effective solution for vaginal dryness, itchiness, painful intercourse, light bladder leakage, skin strengthening and tightening.

- **Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)**
  Pills, patches, suppositories, creams, troches prescribed by a doctor. Long term use of HRT and its use at all for patients with a personal or family history of breast cancer, is not advised.

- **Bio-identical Hormone Replacement Therapy (BHRT)**
  As above but plant derived, compounded hormones.

- **Supplements, herbs and botanicals**
  Such as black cohosh, evening primrose oil and flaxseed may help reduce hot flushes and night sweats.

- **Soy (food forms, not tablets or powders)**
  For assisting with hot flushes and night sweats.

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Tips for a Healthy Menopause

- **Seek medical advice** to balance hormones.

- **Eat a well balance diet:**

High in fibre	Calcium	Iron
Wholegrain breads	Dairy	Lean red meat
Cereals	Fish with bones	Poultry
Pasta	Broccoli	Fish
Rice	Legumes	Eggs
Fresh fruits		Leafy green veggies
Vegetables		Nuts
		Enriched grain products

As there is a direct relationship between a lack of oestrogen and the development of osteoporosis, you may need a calcium supplement if you can't get enough in your diet. You may also need a Vitamin D supplement as your body uses Vitamin D to absorb calcium.

- **Increase your intake of plant-based foods** that have isoflavones (plant oestrogens) such as tofu and soy milk. They may work in the body like a weak form of oestrogen and may lower cholesterol levels and relieve hot flushes and night sweats.

- **Cut back on high-fat foods.** Saturated and trans fats raise cholesterol and increases the risk of heart disease. They can be found in fatty meats, full fat milk, ice cream, cheese, vegetable oils, many baked goods and some margarine.

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- **Limit sugar and salt**; too much sodium is linked to high blood pressure.

- **Water**, drink 6-8 glasses of filtered water each day

- **Limit your alcohol intake**

- **Exercise regularly**, aim for a minimum of 30 minutes at least 4-5 times per week. Weight bearing exercise is a great way to strengthen your bones, improve muscular endurance, posture, balance and co-ordination.

- **If you are suffering hot flushes, avoid trigger foods and drinks** such as spicy foods, caffeine and alcohol

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Your Menopause Medical Checklist

PAP SMEAR

Every 2 years, unless you have had a hysterectomy or as advised by your doctor if you have had previous abnormal smears.

MAMMOGRAM

Every 2 years, especially if you are over 50. If there is a family history of breast cancer, you may require annual mammograms and from an earlier age. Regular self-examination is recommended for early detection of abnormalities.

BLOOD PRESSURE

Every 12 months, as a minimum and more often if you are on blood pressure medication.

CHOLESTEROL LEVELS

Consider having an initial test of your cholesterol levels and other blood lipids. This is particularly important if you are overweight or at high risk e.g family history of heart disease.

BLOOD SUGAR LEVELS

It is advisable to have an initial assessment and further testing will depend on the initial result.

BONE SCAN

As poor bone density is an issue for post-menopausal women, an initial bone scan is advisable.

Our team of gynaecologists, women's health doctors and GynaeLase experts at Specialist Clinics of Australia are available to help with your menopausal care. Having worked within Sydney's major hospitals, our team provide a broad level of expert knowledge with the most technologically advanced treatment options all in the one convenient CBD location. For a personal and confidential appointment, please call **02 8459 0312** or visit **www.specialistaustralia.com.au**

If required a referral can be arranged at the time of booking your appointment.

Specialist Clinics of Australia

T (02) 8459 0312 **F** 1300 88 05 66 **E** doctors@specialistaustralia.com.au **www.specialistaustralia.com.au**

SPECIALIST CLINICS OF AUSTRALIA

CONTACT US

TELEPHONE
02 8459 0312

EMAIL
doctors@specialistaustralia.com.au

WEBSITE
www.specialistaustralia.com.au

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