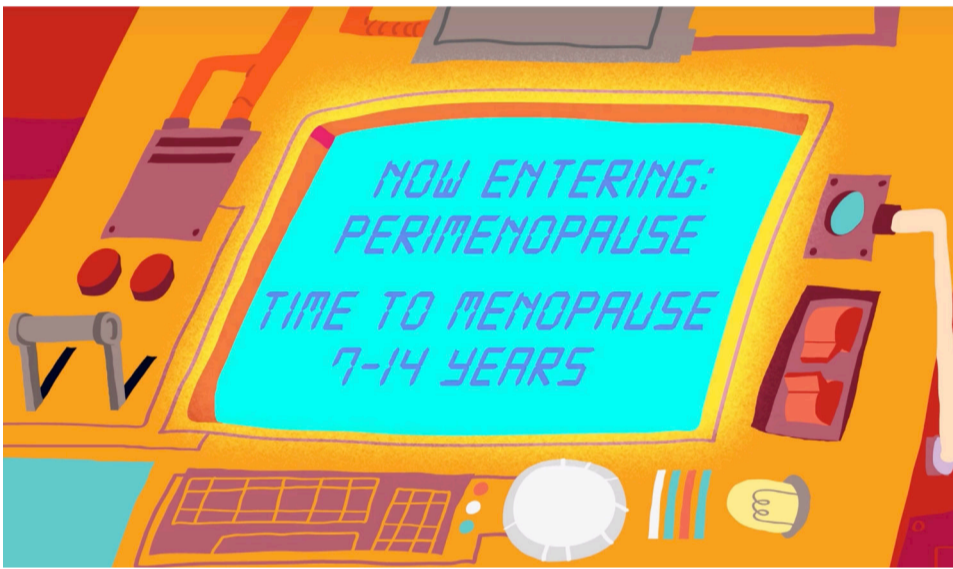


# Menopause



Menopause is a natural part of the aging process for all women. Menopause itself marks a point in time that is 12 months after the last menstrual period, if no other cause for menstrual cessation is determined.

## The journey to menopause



The journey to menopause usually begins between the ages of 45 and 55 as reproductive hormones begin to decline. This pre-menopausal phase is called “perimenopause” and it usually lasts for 7 years, but it can extend for as long as 14 years before menopause is actually reached. Some women may enter menopause earlier due to surgery or illness.

## What to expect during perimenopause



During perimenopause, women may experience significant changes in their hormonal balance, specifically in the production of progesterone and estrogen, two hormones produced in the adrenal cortex and the ovaries. These hormones have influence over many different processes and systems in the body, including internal temperature control, weight, the brain and mood, the health of bones, the heart, skin and other tissues.

## Physical and emotional changes



Hormonal fluctuations can lead to some significant physical and emotional changes including: increased weight gain; hot flashes and night sweats; heart palpitations; mood swings; sleep disturbances; brain fog; body aches and pains; fatigue; vaginal dryness; a decreased interest in physical intimacy; a change in a woman's periods; urinary urgency.

## Treatment options



The frequency, duration and intensity of symptoms is uniquely personal and hard to predict. Fortunately there are many treatment and self-care options available including:

- topical estrogen and hormone replacement therapy
- breathing exercises and meditation to manage mood changes;
- and lifestyle changes addressing diet and exercise, quitting smoking, and moderating alcohol consumption.

After menopause, women enter the postmenopausal phase. At this time there's an increased risk for heart disease, osteoporosis, weight gain, urinary incontinence and urinary tract infections. It's therefore critical to continue healthy lifestyle habits to maintain full body health.

**We can't stop the journey, but we can try to make it a better trip along the way. Consult your doctor to learn more about the menopausal journey, and develop a strategy for a healthy transition.**

The information above is drawn from public health sources; it is not designed to provide medical advice. Individuals should consult their own health professional for guidance on all health matters.

Sources: <https://www.webmd.com/menopause/guide/emotional-roller-coaster>; <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/infographics/menopause-tips-healthy-transition>; <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/sex-and-menopause-treatment-symptoms>; <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/hot-flashes-what-can-i-do>; <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/sleep-problems-and-menopause-what-can-i-do>