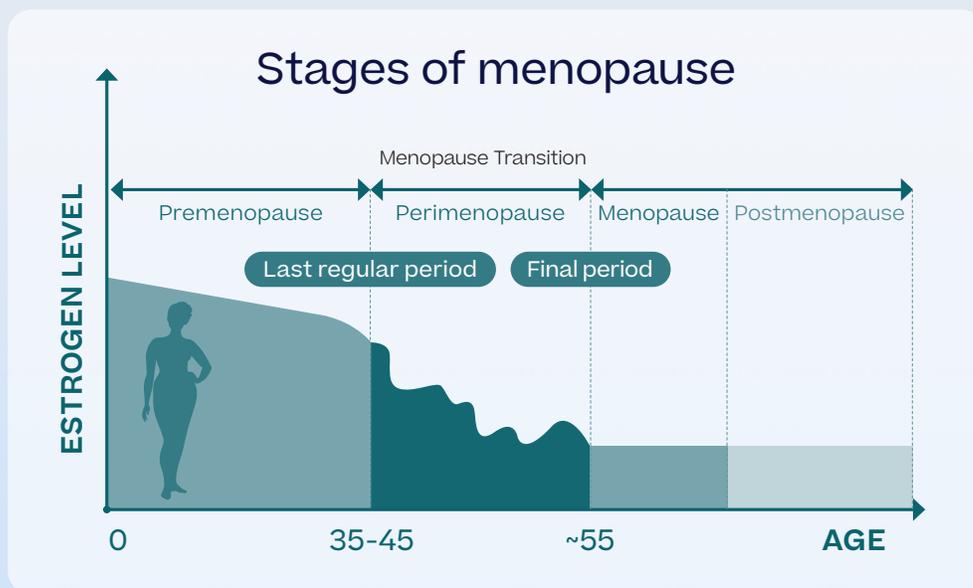


Women's Health Awareness Month: *perimenopause / menopause*

Menopause is a natural stage of life marked by the end of the menstrual cycle.

It is diagnosed once menses has ceased for 12 consecutive months. This typically occurs when people reach their 40s or 50s. Hormones shift dramatically during the menopause transition or perimenopause.



Stages

In perimenopause, estrogen and progesterone start to drop. The drop accelerates in the last few years before the last period occurs and can begin 8 to 10 years before menopause. During this time, people may experience symptoms such as hot flashes, mood changes and brain fog. Menopause occurs when the ovaries have stopped releasing eggs and have significantly reduced estrogen production. By postmenopause, periods will have ceased for over a year, and some symptoms may begin to taper off. However, lower estrogen can lead to higher risks of certain health conditions.

- Initially, there is an excess in estrogen, which is exacerbated by high insulin levels and stress hormones.
- Later, there is a drop in estrogen, which alters where the body stores fat (increases visceral/belly fat).
- Lowered progesterone can cause bloating, water retention, and decreased sleep.
- Lowered testosterone decreases energy and muscle mass.



Supporting a partner during Menopause

Menopause looks different for each person who experiences it, but there are some common symptoms you and your partner can expect.

Mental and emotional symptoms

- Disinterest in life – children, family, or life in general
- Mood swings, irritability, crying spells, or low mood
- Brain fog, difficulty concentrating, or memory issues
- Anxiety or panic attacks
- Feelings of loss of self and self-confidence
- Depression

How to help

Listen and communicate.

Know that everyone's experience will be different.

Encourage them when they are feeling low, or a lack of confidence.

Have **empathy** and **patience**.

Educate yourself so they don't have to explain everything when they're struggling.

Understand it can be difficult to find a menopause specialist and there may be frustration with providers who don't listen and understand their issues.

Realize the symptoms are real and not just in their head.

Physical symptoms

- Hot flashes and night sweats, or conversely, cold flashes or an intense sensation of cold
- Changes in libido
- Joint pain
- Weight gain
- Sleep issues
- Fatigue or low energy
- An increase in facial hair or hair loss
- Restless legs

Support an active and healthy lifestyle. Invite them for walks or other physical activity, but don't pressure them and understand they may not be up for it.

Cook meals together, and try to cut down on alcohol and smoking, both of which can intensify menopause symptoms. This may mean needing to change the way you socialize.

If you share a sleep space, keep the temperature turned down. Use cooling blankets and make sure everyone has their own blanket.

Even when you know what to look for and what you can do to help, it can be hard to start a conversation about menopause. Log on to guidanceresources.com to sign up for a Huddle, Webinar or Practice to learn more about this transition and how you can make it easier on your partner. You can also reach out to speak directly with a counselor 24/7.



Call:
App: GuidanceNowSM
Online: guidanceresources.com

TRS: Dial 711
Web ID:

→
 Scan for more resources

