

MENOPAUSE

What is menopause?

Menopause is the time when a woman no longer has menstrual periods and is no longer able to have children. Menopause begins when a woman has not had a period for 12 months and usually occurs between the ages of 45-55. This is a natural occurring time in a woman's life but can occur suddenly if a woman has her ovaries surgically removed.

What are the symptoms of menopause?

Because of the change in the level of hormones, some women will experience hot flashes, night sweats, sleep disturbances, depression, poor concentration, mood changes, bloating, breast tenderness, impaired memory, vaginal dryness, lack of desire for sex, and weight gain. The number and severity of symptoms vary greatly. These symptoms can start before a woman is in menopause and can sometimes continue for 5-10 years after menopause.

What can be done to help relieve the symptoms?

Hormone replacement may be helpful for some women. However, some of the recent health studies question the benefits of hormone replacement therapy as there is a risk of developing breast cancer, heart attacks, strokes, and blood clots. Some low dose antidepressants can be helpful. Below are some ideas you can do to help reduce the symptoms.

- Avoid caffeine, alcohol and spicy foods
- Dress in light layers
- Get plenty of exercise
- Try relaxation techniques including yoga, tai chi or meditation
- Use water based lubricants during intercourse (like KY Jelly)
- Practice slow deep breathing whenever a hot flash starts to come

What are the long term effects of menopause?

You can reduce the risk of long-term problems such as osteoporosis and heart disease by

- Control your blood pressure and cholesterol
- Do not smoke
- Eat a healthy diet
- Get regular exercise
- Take calcium and vitamin D

Are there benefits to menopause?

Remember, menopause is a natural occurrence in a woman's life. Some women find menopause a good thing because they no longer have to worry about periods or getting pregnant.