



Welcome

Your journey through menopause is unique. Though there are many ways to reach the same destination, the key is finding what works best for you.

Spiritual and emotional well being

Once the wild ride of menopause is over, many women believe that these years are some of the best of their lives. Your inner work and the relationships that you've nurtured provide a lovely foundation.

Make time for yourself—Arriving at menopause may finally mean more time to devote to your own personal and spiritual growth. Our minds, bodies, and spirits are intimately interconnected. How we care for ourselves now in every aspect of our journey affects us on many levels and in many ways. By now, you know what works for you and what doesn't.

Make peace with change

Who is that person staring back at me in the mirror?—Your reflection is vastly different now, from what it was in your 20's. Time, life experience, and pregnancies all leave their marks. The changes occurred gradually, yet seem like they happened overnight.

The effects of gravity—You may be comfortable with the signs of aging or you may wonder, "How could this happen to me?" While there is no way to stop the aging process or its effects, there are options that can help you feel better about yourself.

You may have a glow—That doesn't come from hot flashes, but from a deep comfort within. For some women, exercise or a change in diet leads to peace; for others, seeing a plastic surgeon or dermatologist is the right choice. And for others, accepting these changes is the path that feels right.

Your ovaries

The transformation that you are experiencing is influenced by dramatic shifts in your hormone levels. Your ovaries are responsible for most of these changes, and here's why:

Your ovary uses FSH (follicle stimulating hormone) and estrogen, progesterone, and androgenic hormones, such as testosterone to produce eggs. As these levels decrease, women experience a variety of symptoms.

Perimenopause—The transition stage before periods stop completely. There may be wide fluctuations in hormone levels, intense symptoms, and changes in periods. The average age is mid to late 40's.

Menopause—When menstrual periods have been absent for 12 months, the ovarian hormones decrease dramatically. Some women have intense symptoms that vary from day to day and month to month. Others have less bothersome symptoms. The average age is 54.

Surgical and medical menopause—Ovarian function stops from surgical removal of the ovaries, chemotherapy, or medications. This abrupt halt in hormone production usually leads to severe symptoms such as hot flashes, night sweats, and bone loss.

Post menopause—Many women report that this is the best time in their lives. Hot flashes and night sweats diminish and periods are a memory. Many of the changes that occur now are not from lack of hormones, but from getting older. Energy, vitality, and sexual interest may return.

Your body

Hot flashes—May be a sudden feeling of intense heat that moves from your shoulders to your face and scalp. Some women feel their hearts racing. Your face may redden and sweat may appear on your forehead. Triggered by: drinking alcohol, smoking, hot showers, too many clothes, a sudden change in temperature, stress, a hot meal, or a hot drink.

Night sweats—Often the first sign that menopause is approaching. Some women sweat so much at night that they must change their clothes. Many wake up with clammy skin. Others only have a slight sensation of warmth.

Feelings of warmth—Most women feel much warmer than they did in their 30's.

Racing heart—Palpitations may occur with or without hot flashes. It can be unnerving and scary. You may also sense a pulsation or pounding in your ears. Be sure to discuss this with your provider.

Tender breasts—Your breasts may become sore and enlarged from fluctuations in estrogen levels.

Hair where you don't want it—Coarse hair on the chin and upper lip, yet thinning on the scalp. (Oh great!) Electrolysis works well for facial hair. Discuss hair loss with your provider.

Change in sexual interest—You may have more or less, and it may change often. As if that weren't enough, our sexual response changes too.

Waking up early—And difficulty returning to sleep. This may or may not be caused by night sweats. Changes in your sleep patterns and sleepless nights are common and may lead to irritability.

Short-term memory loss—Caused by lack of sleep.

Irritability—Never doubt the power of hormones! Think back to your teen years. The hormone fluctuations now are just as intense and lead to mood changes. Lack of sleep doesn't help.

Weight gain—It seems as if 5 to 10 pounds appeared overnight without any change in your diet or exercise routine. It's harder to lose weight, and you need fewer calories now.

Dry skin—Use moisturizer. Daily sunscreen helps prevent skin cancer.

