

Women's Health

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What is Menopause?

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The word "menopause" literally means the "end of monthly cycles" from the Greek words "pauis" (cessation) and the word root men from "mensis" meaning (month). Menopause is the permanent cessation of menses and is defined as the end of the last menstrual period. However, this date can only be fixed retrospectively, once 12 months have gone by with no menstrual flow at all. In common terms, however, the word "menopause" usually refers not to one day but to the whole of the menopause transition years. This span of time is also commonly called the **change of life**, the change, or the **climacteric**, and more recently as "perimenopause".



Does every woman go through menopause?

Menopause is an unavoidable change that every woman will experience, assuming she reaches middle age and beyond. The average age of menopause in western societies is 51 years whereas in Singapore it is 49 years. Menopause has a wide starting range, but can usually be expected in the age range of 42-58.

Menopause is officially declared when there has been amenorrhea (absence of menstruation) for one complete year, but there are many signs and symptoms that lead up to this point, many of which may extend well beyond it too. A final menstrual period before 40 years of age is regarded as premature menopause.

How long does it typically last?

The transitional period before menopause, also known as the perimenopause, often accompanied by irregularities in the menstrual cycle along with the typical symptoms of early menopause, can begin up to 10 years prior to the last menstrual period. Once the periods have been absent for 12 months, the woman is considered to be menopausal. Postmenopause is all of the time in a woman's life that takes place after her last period.

What are the symptoms of menopause?

The duration and severity of menopause symptoms varies from individual to individual. Genetics, lifestyle, diet, stress, general health and cultural perspective are all factors which influence when and how dramatically a woman will experience menopause symptoms. Some symptoms, like vaginal dryness and urinary symptoms, may persist into postmenopause, but most diminish and disappear within 2-3 years.

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