



MENOPAUSE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

WHAT IS MENOPAUSE?

Menopause is a natural phase of life that marks the end of your menstrual cycle. You officially reach menopause when you haven't had a period for 12 months in a row.

In Australia, the average age for this change is around 51, but it can happen earlier or later depending on your genetics and lifestyle.

The journey usually happens in stages:

- Perimenopause: Your periods become irregular. They may become shorter, longer, heavier, or lighter.
- Menopause: You have had no periods for one full year.
- Post-menopause: The time of your life after menopause.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Every woman is different. You might feel many of these changes, or hardly any at all:

- Hot flashes and night sweats: Sudden feelings of heat or waking up sweaty.
- Sleep issues: Trouble falling or staying asleep.
- Mood changes: Feeling anxious, low, or having mood swings.
- Brain fog: Forgetting small things (like where you put your keys) or trouble concentrating.
- Body changes: Aching joints, weight gain (especially around the tummy), or skin changes.
- Vaginal changes: Dryness, discomfort, or pain during sex.

HOW IS IT DIAGNOSED?

It is usually simple. If you are over 45, have irregular periods, and have some of the symptoms above, your doctor can diagnose you without tests. Blood tests are usually not needed unless you are under 40 or have unusual symptoms.

How does menopause affect your health?

Lower hormone levels (estrogen) can change your body in long-term ways:

- Bone Health: You may lose bone density, which can lead to osteoporosis (brittle bones).
- Heart Health: Your risk of heart disease can increase.
- Metabolism: Your body may burn energy more slowly.
- Pelvic Health: You may experience bladder leaking or a more frequent need to pee.

WHAT ARE YOUR TREATMENT OPTIONS?

You don't have to suffer in silence. There are many ways to manage symptoms:

- Lifestyle Changes: Gentle exercise, stopping smoking, and eating a calcium-rich diet can help bones and mood.
- Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT): This replaces the hormones your body has stopped making. It is the most effective treatment for hot flashes.
- Non-Hormonal Treatments: Certain medications can help with hot flashes and mood if you cannot take hormones.

NEXT STEPS

- Track your cycle: Keep a note of your periods and symptoms.
- Talk to your GP: If symptoms are bothering you, book a long appointment to discuss a plan.
- Be kind to yourself: This is a significant life transition, and it is okay to ask for support.

Further Reading:

1. [Jean Hailes for Women's Health](#).
2. [Australasian Menopause Society](#).
3. [Healthdirect Australia](#).



References:

1. Jean Hailes for Women's Health. Menopause. Jean Hailes for Women's Health. Updated February 5, 2024. Accessed January 1, 2026. <https://www.jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/menopause>
2. Australasian Menopause Society. Diagnosing Menopause. Australasian Menopause Society. Updated November 2023. Accessed January 1, 2026. <https://www.menopause.org.au/hp/information-sheets/diagnosing-menopause>
3. The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG). Management of the Menopause. RANZCOG. Published July 2023. Accessed January 1, 2026. <https://ranzcof.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Management-of-the-Menopause.pdf>
4. Healthdirect Australia. Menopause. Healthdirect. Updated December 2023. Accessed January 1, 2026. <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/menopause>