

Menopause

Supplements

Calcium and vitamin D can improve bone density and help fight osteoporosis.

Natural health products

There are many natural health products available without a prescription. Some may be harmful to those with a history of certain cancers or due to drug interactions.

Other treatments may be suggested. Ask your healthcare professional for guidance.

Lifestyle Changes

Being active can help reduce the severity of certain menopausal symptoms. Remember that a healthy diet, exercise, and managing weight and stress are essential during this phase of life.

For more information or support:

The Society of Obstetricians and
Gynaecologists of Canada
www.menopauseandu.ca

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Menopause marks the end of a woman's reproductive years. It is the stage in life when menstruation ceases and the ovaries stop releasing eggs and secreting estrogen and progesterone. A woman is said to reach menopause when she has not had a period for 12 consecutive months. Most women go through menopause in their early 50s. It may start earlier however, due to illness, medication, chemotherapy, radiation, or surgery.

Symptoms

The time leading up to menopause (2 to 7 years) is known as perimenopause. During this time, periods may become irregular. Menstruation may become longer or shorter and heavier or lighter than usual.

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Menopause can bring about physical and emotional changes. Symptoms and their severity can vary from woman to woman. While some symptoms are caused by hormonal fluctuations, others are the result of physical changes associated with aging.

Symptoms include:

- Hot flashes
- Night sweats
- Sleep disturbances
- Vaginal dryness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Memory lapses
- Mood swings
- Depression
- Weight gain
- Loss of libido
- Skin aging
- Dry hair
- Fatigue
- Bladder leaks, urinary urgency

Tips to Reduce Symptoms

Hot flashes

- Limit or avoid hot beverages, alcohol, and spicy foods
- Reduce meal portions and snack between meals
- Quit smoking

Vaginal dryness

- Use a lubricant for added comfort during intercourse. You may also benefit from a vaginal moisturizer. Speak to your pharmacist for more information

Sleep disturbances

- Go to bed and get up at the same time every day. Avoid caffeine late in the afternoon and limit alcohol consumption

Weight gain

- Reduce fat and overall calorie intake, exercise regularly

See a doctor if:

Your periods occur more often than every 3 weeks, if bleeding is abnormally heavy or symptoms become disruptive (sleep disturbances caused by night sweats, trouble working because of hot flashes, or if you are feeling sad).

Non-Medicinal Therapies

Several approaches may help, including:

Exercise

Physical activity offers important benefits during menopause. Exercise helps with weight management, promotes cardiovascular health, prevents bone density loss, and improves sex drive. Women who exercise regularly also experience fewer moderate-to-severe hot flashes than inactive women.

Relaxation techniques

Deep breathing, massage, yoga, visualization, and meditation can help counter certain health issues.

Drug Treatments

There are several useful products, including:

Hormone therapy

Estrogen and progesterone can help alleviate certain menopausal symptoms. These medications can reduce hot flashes, vaginal dryness, sleep disturbances, concentration problems, and mood swings. Hormone therapy however, is not suitable for everyone.