

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT MENOPAUSE

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What is menopause?

- Menopause is a natural process that results in the end of menstrual periods.
- Most women have their last period at about age 52.
- Menopause can occur early if a woman smokes, has her ovaries removed, or has had chemotherapy or radiation.

How can I tell if I have reached menopause?

- If you haven't had a period in 12 months and are in your 50s, you have probably reached menopause.
- Hot flashes, night sweats, and vaginal dryness are the most common symptoms of menopause. These are caused by changes in hormones that happen with menopause.
- During menopause, some women have mood changes, trouble sleeping, pain, or memory problems but these symptoms may not be because of hormone changes.

Should I have laboratory tests for menopause?

- Laboratory tests are not usually needed for menopause.
- Your doctor might measure follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) level and do other tests to be sure that menopause is causing your symptoms, especially in younger women with menopause-like symptoms.

Should I have treatment for my symptoms?

Usually, the symptoms of menopause go away over time without treatment, but some women have them for years.

These things can help women with symptoms:

- Don't drink a lot of alcohol or smoke
- Exercise and eat healthy
- Use vaginal creams and lubricants



- Dress in layers, keep rooms cool, sleep with an ice pack under your pillow

If doing these things doesn't help, ask your doctor about hormone therapy, nonhormonal drugs, and other treatments.

Should I take hormone therapy?

- Discuss the risks and benefits of hormone therapy with your doctor.
- Hormones help the most with hot flashes, night sweats, and vaginal dryness and also keep your bones from thinning.
- However, hormone therapy has many serious side effects (blood clots, heart attacks, strokes, breast cancer, and gallbladder disease).
- Hormone therapy should be used for 1 to 2 years at the most if no other remedies work.

For More Information

Web Sites with Information on Menopause:

www.menopause.org

The North American Menopause Society

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/menopause.html

National Library of Medicine, MedlinePlus

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