

Menopause: Glossary of Terms

A glossary of menopause terms to help you better understand the conditions, treatments, and phases of this stage of life.

Amenorrhea: The absence of a woman's monthly period.

Anxiety: A feeling of apprehension, fear, nervousness, or dread accompanied by restlessness or tension.

Complementary therapy: Practices not generally recognised by the medical community as standard or conventional medical approaches and used to enhance or complement standard treatments. Complementary medicine includes dietary supplements, vitamins, herbal preparations, herbal tea, acupuncture, massage therapy, magnet therapy, spiritual healing, and meditation.

Depression: A condition characterised by altered mood. There is loss of interest in pleasurable activities. Depression prevents a person from leading a normal life. Types of depression include but are not limited to major depression, bipolar depression, chronic low-grade depression (dysthymia), and seasonal depression (seasonal affective disorder or SAD).

Diabetes: A group of diseases in which the body cannot properly control the amount of sugar in the blood. As a result, the level of sugar in the blood is too high causing a variety of complications ranging from cardiovascular disease (heart disease) to blindness and kidney failure. This disease occurs when the body does not produce enough insulin or does not use it properly.

Dysmenorrhea: Pain associated with a woman's menstrual period.

Dyspareunia: Pain during sexual intercourse.

Endometriosis: A condition in which tissue that looks and acts like endometrial tissue is found outside the uterus, usually inside the abdominal cavity.

Fibroids: Common benign tumours, made up of muscle cells and connective tissue that develop within the wall of the uterus.

Gynaecologist: A doctor who specialises in the care and health of the female reproductive organs.

Heart disease: A condition that affects the heart muscle or the blood vessels of the heart.

Hormone replacement therapy (HRT): Involves taking oestrogen to replace the decline in your body's own levels around the time of the menopause. This can relieve many of the associated symptoms.

Hormones: Chemicals produced by glands in the body. Hormones control the actions of certain cells or organs.

Hot flush: A momentary sensation of heat that may be accompanied by a red, flushed face and sweating.

Hysterectomy: The surgical removal of the uterus.

Incontinence: Loss of bladder and/or bowel control.

Induced menopause: Menopause that occurs when the ovaries are surgically removed. Induced menopause can also result from damage to the ovaries caused by radiation or by medications used in chemotherapy.

Insomnia: Difficulty in going to sleep or getting enough sleep.

Menopause: End of a woman's reproductive years. Diagnosed after regular menstrual periods have stopped for 12 consecutive months (in the absence of any other medications or medical conditions that may stop periods).

Menorrhagia: Menstrual periods with heavy and/or prolonged bleeding.

Menstrual cycle: The monthly cycle of hormonal changes from the beginning of one menstrual period to the beginning of the next.

Menstruation: The periodic shedding of the uterine lining (also called getting a period).

Osteoporosis: A condition that is characterised by a decrease in bone strength and density, causing bones to become fragile or "thin."

Ovary: A small organ in the pelvis that makes female hormones and holds egg cells which, when fertilised, can develop into a baby. There are two ovaries: one located on the left side of the uterus (the hollow, pear-shaped organ where a baby grows) and one on the right

Palpitations: Heartbeats that suddenly become more noticeable. Feeling your heart beating faster than usual due to the changing hormone levels. This can sometimes happen during hot flashes.

Perimenopause: The time of a woman's life when menstrual periods become irregular. Refers to the time near menopause. It's also called the menopause transition.

Post-menopause: Refers to the time after menopause. Menopause is the time in a woman's life when menstrual periods stop permanently.

Premature menopause: Menopause that occurs before the age of 40 that may be the result of genetics, autoimmune disorders, or medical procedures.

Premature ovarian insufficiency: A condition in which a woman's ovaries, for unknown reasons, stop producing eggs before the age of 40.

Surgical menopause: Induced menopause that results from surgical removal of the ovaries for medical reasons. Surgical menopause can occur at any age.

Urinary tract infection (UTI): A condition that occurs when bacteria from outside the body gets into the urinary tract and causes infection and inflammation.

Vaginal dryness: Inadequate lubrication of the vagina that can be caused by low oestrogen levels, medication, or lack of sexual arousal.