

What is menopause?

What it is:

Menopause is a natural life stage that marks the end of menstrual cycles. It happens when the ovaries stop releasing eggs and hormone levels (oestrogen, progesterone, and testosterone) decline. Menopause is not a single moment; it is a transition made up of several stages.

What you might notice:

You may experience physical or emotional changes such as irregular periods, hot flashes, sleep disruption, changes in mood, reduced energy, or changes to libido. Some people notice symptoms gradually, while others experience sudden shifts. It's normal to feel unsure where you are in the process.

What may help:

Understanding the three stages, **perimenopause, menopause, and post-menopause**, can make it easier to recognise what your body is going through and what support you may need. Learning about symptoms and lifestyle changes may also help you feel more prepared and in control.

The stages of menopause

Perimenopause

- The transition leading up to menopause
- Hormone levels rise and fall unevenly
- Periods may become irregular, lighter, heavier, or more frequent
- This stage can last several years

Menopause

- Reached when you have had **12 months without a period**
- Hormone levels are much lower



- Some symptoms may ease, while others may continue

Post-menopause

- The years after menopause
- Some symptoms may settle, but lower hormone levels increase risks for things like bone thinning and heart health
- Support and symptom management remain important

When to seek support:

Seek help if your symptoms are affecting daily life, feel confusing, or change suddenly. Support is especially important if periods stop very early, if symptoms appear abruptly, or if you are unsure whether your experience is typical.

Questions you may want to ask a clinician:

- Which stage of menopause am I in?
- Are my symptoms typical for this stage?
- What treatment or lifestyle changes could support me now?
- Should I consider HRT or other therapies based on my symptoms and health?



Remember that you're not alone, and you don't have to wait until things feel overwhelming to talk. Reaching out can help you understand what your body is going through and make sure you have the support you need.

