



Menopause

The onset of menopause most commonly occurs when a woman is in her 40s or 50s, when the body stops ovulating. Menopause is said to begin 12 months after the last menstrual period. If menopause begins in a woman under 40, it is called premature menopause and can be the result of a variety of factors, such as chemotherapy and radiotherapy in the treatment of cancer, autoimmune or genetic diseases that cause the ovaries to produce less hormones, and surgeries that involve the removal of the uterus and/or ovaries.

Whilst menopause is a natural stage of a woman's life, the hormonal changes that the body undergoes in some cases results in discomfort and pain. Many of these issues can be addressed in consultation with your gynaecologist.

Symptoms

There are some clinical indicators of menopause that can come on in the time leading up to the onset of menopause (perimenopause) and/or during menopause. The following is a list of the most common symptoms:

- Irregular menstrual cycles
- Vaginal dryness
- Sagging of the breasts
- Dry skin
- Thinning hair
- Slowing of the metabolism
- Weight gain
- Hot flushes
- Night sweats
- Difficulty sleeping
- Mood changes

Medical conditions associated with menopause

Due to the body undergoing significant hormonal changes, menopause can be accompanied by other medical conditions, some of which are serious and require intervention. Some such conditions are:

- Increase in risk of cardiovascular disease
- Decrease in bone density leading to brittle bones and osteoporosis
- Loss of vaginal elasticity
- Urge incontinence or stress incontinence in urination
- Vaginal dryness
- Loss of libido

Diagnosis

Menopause is usually identified by its accompanying symptoms, and can be confirmed with a blood test for hormone levels ordered by your doctor.

Treatment

Whilst menopause, being the cessation of ovulation and menstrual periods, needs no treatment, there are treatment options available for many of its negative side-effects. Such treatments should only be undertaken after consultation with your gynaecologist. The below are some of these treatment options:

- Hormone replacement therapy
- Antidepressants
- Medication to increase bone density
- Laser therapy (MonaLisa Touch) for vaginal dryness



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Lifestyle Remedies

Certain symptoms of menopause can be reduced with lifestyle remedies.

- Hot flushes can be alleviated by drinking cold water or staying in a cool room
- The frequency of hot flushes can be reduced by identifying factors which trigger them (for example hot beverages, alcohol, caffeine and spicy foods) and avoiding these where possible
- Use water-based vaginal lubricants to help with vaginal dryness and associated discomfort
- Reduce stress, get adequate sleep, eat healthy, stay active and do not smoke
- Exercise regularly
- Do pelvic floor exercises (“Kegels”) to strengthen the pelvic floor muscles and improve urinary incontinence.