

# Menopause 101

Although the term menopause is often used loosely to describe the entire time frame of **midlife** changes, there are different stages to menopause.

## PERIMENOPAUSE

The transitional time when the body experiences a natural decline in reproductive hormones, resulting in the end of a woman's menstrual cycles.

This **menopause transition** typically lasts 4-8 years, but can last more than a decade.

## MENOPAUSE

The moment in life that is defined once 12 consecutive months have passed after the last menstrual cycle.

## POSTMENOPAUSE

The life stage after menopause has completed.

The average age of menopause in the United States is 51. However, medical procedures, such as surgery, radiation, or chemotherapy, that damage or remove the ovaries can result in the onset of menopause, regardless of age. Between 5-10% of women will enter menopause before the age of 45, and another 5% after the age of 55.<sup>1</sup>

Common symptoms associated with menopause include:

- ▶ Changes in your menstrual cycle
- ▶ Hot flashes, night sweats
- ▶ Sleep disturbances, insomnia
- ▶ Brain fog, difficulty concentrating
- ▶ Weight gain
- ▶ Vaginal dryness or irritation
- ▶ Reduced sexual desire or arousal
- ▶ Joint pain

**There is no right or wrong way to progress through the stages of menopause.**



While certain symptoms may be periodic (e.g., hot flashes and brain fog), other imprecise symptoms such as sleep and mood disturbances, weight gain, and joint pain can impact overall health, quality of life, and perspectives on work-life engagement. Not all women will experience symptoms that are disruptive to their daily lives; however, for those who do, a combination of medical treatments, supportive community, and an accessible work environment, can help women better navigate their menopause journey.

The [\*\*SWHR Menopause Preparedness Toolkit: A Woman's Empowerment Guide\*\*](#) contains additional information about understanding menopause and its impact on women's health, as well as wellness tips to support this important transition and life stage.