

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 55.¹

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

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



It is important to note that treatments exist for every menopause symptom – from over-the-counter supplements, lubricants, yoga, and lifestyle practices to cognitive behavioral therapy, **hormone therapies**, and nonhormonal medications.

The **SWHR Menopause Preparedness Toolkit: A Woman's Empowerment Guide** has additional information to support women through major menopause milestones, including treatment options for menopause symptoms, and tips for conversations with health care providers, family, and friends.