

# Menopause

Menopause is normal and natural. It is when the ovary stops producing hormones and menstruation comes to an end. Ovaries produce several hormones; the most significant one is estrogen. The average age of natural menopause is 51 years. Menopause can occur naturally or surgically. Natural menopause (loss of ovarian hormone secretion) is confirmed when a woman has not had a menstrual cycle for 12 months in a row.

## Surgical Menopause

Surgical menopause occurs when both ovaries are removed at the time of surgery. If you are still having menstrual periods when both of your ovaries are removed, you may experience symptoms of menopause approximately two to five days after surgery. This is due to the decrease in your estrogen level. The symptoms can be different for every woman, but may include hot flashes, cold sweats, difficulty sleeping and mood swings. bothersome symptoms of the vagina and vulva (outer lips of the vagina) can increase over time with the loss of hormones.

## Symptoms of Menopause

Many women experience hot flashes, vaginal dryness and other physical changes with menopause. The walls of the vagina can become thin and dry (which can cause painful sexual intercourse).

## Treatment of Menopause Symptoms

Menopause symptoms often improve with lifestyle changes

- avoiding triggers
- dressing in layers
- lowering the temperature of the room or using fans

Complementary and alternative therapies

- acupuncture
- cognitive behavioral therapy
- herbal therapy (black cohosh)
- hypnosis
- weight loss

## Vaginal Dryness Treatment Options

### Non-hormonal remedies

- Vaginal lubricants reduce discomfort with sexual activity when the vagina is dry by decreasing friction. Commonly used water-based products include: Astro-glide, fem glide, K-Y jelly. Silicone based products Pjur, Uberlube, Pink and others
- Vaginal moisturizers are creams for the vagina to give added moisture. They can be used several times a week at bedtime. Commonly used products include Replens, K-Y Liquibeads
- Regular sexual stimulation promotes vaginal blood flow and secretions
- Vaginal dilators can stretch and enlarge the vagina if it has become short and narrow or if involuntary tightening occurs making sexual activity uncomfortable
- Pelvic floor exercises can strengthen weak vaginal muscles and relax tight ones

### Hormonal remedies

- Prescription vaginal estrogen therapy includes creams, vaginal pills, vaginal ring, vaginal suppository
- Other prescription therapies includes Ospemifene (Osphena), Dehydroepiandrosterone (Intrarosa)

For additional menopause information visit [menopause.org](http://menopause.org)