

Understanding Menopause Stages and Terms

What is perimenopause, anyway? Knowing the right words to describe the menopausal transition may help you get through it.



Although the word “**menopause**” often serves as shorthand for the whole process, the menopausal transition actually happens in stages — and menopause is only one of them.

Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause when a woman has symptoms (like hot flashes and irregular periods) linked to hormone changes.



May begin as early as your mid 30s or as late as your mid 50s



Average length is 4 years but can last 8 years or more



You can still get pregnant during perimenopause, even if you’re not having regular periods

Menopause technically only lasts a single day — the one marking 12 consecutive months without a period.



Usually happens at age 51 or 52 in the U.S.



Is a moment in time, not a stage

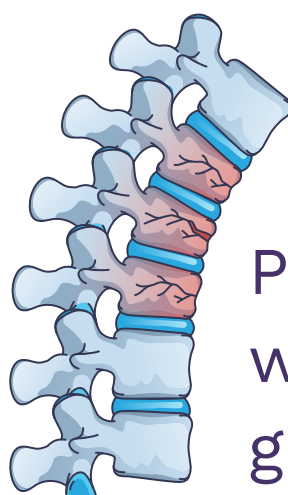


Marks the end of your reproductive years

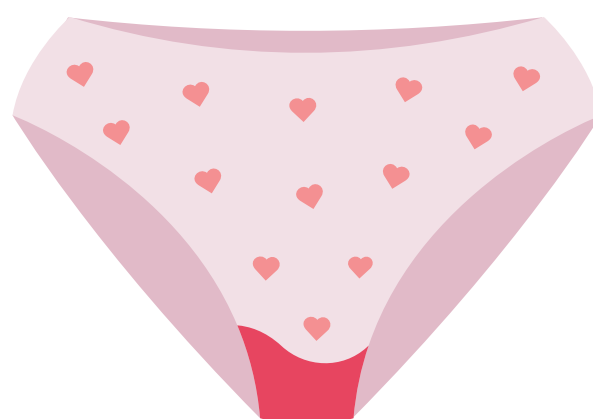
Postmenopause starts the day after you’ve gone 12 months without a period (menopause) and lasts the rest of your life.



Perimenopause symptoms may ease up or go away completely

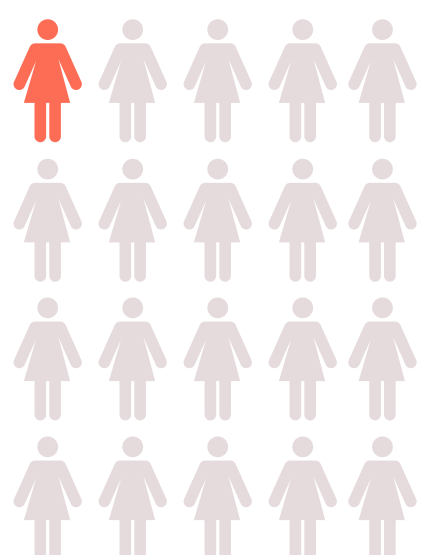


Postmenopausal women are at greater risk of osteoporosis and cardiovascular disease

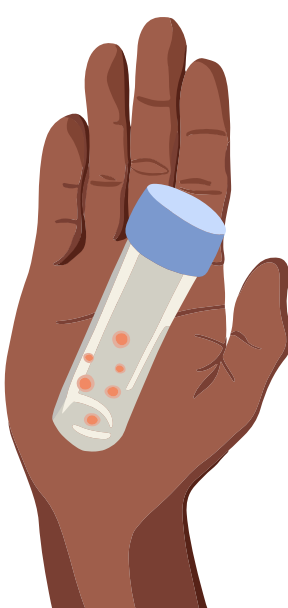


Any bleeding after menopause should be checked by a clinician

Early menopause is when menopause happens before age 45.



Affects 1 in 20 women



Can happen due to certain health conditions or medical treatments

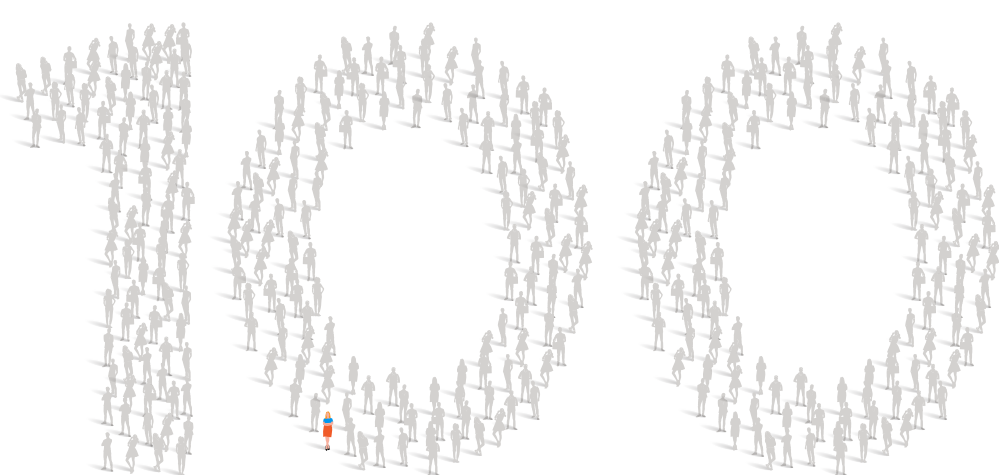


Happens without a direct cause up to half the time



May be more likely to affect you if your mother or grandmother went through menopause early, or if you started your period before age 11

Premature menopause is when menopause happens before age 40.



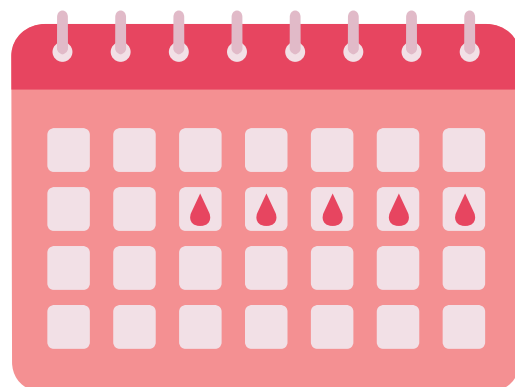
Affects about 1 in 100 women



Can happen due to certain health conditions or medical treatments



Happens without a direct cause up to half the time



Period changes are usually the first sign

Medically induced menopause is menopause caused by a medical treatment like chemotherapy, radiation or surgery.

Happens very fast (overnight or within weeks)



Symptoms are the same but may be more intense because they come on so suddenly



Your care team can go over options (including hormone therapy) to help you manage your symptoms



Note: While it’s not a technical term, some people use the word “**premenopause**” to refer to the timespan between when you start your period and when you reach menopause.

Questions about the stages and terminology of menopause? Talk to your clinician or visit [healthywomen.org/tag/menopause](https://www.healthywomen.org/tag/menopause) to learn more.