



October 18, 2023

World Menopause Day!

(We would like to thank Jessica Scattolon from Alter-Ego for today's ReFresh article!)

Menopause is having a moment today — in the news anyway. Women across the globe have been having this moment since the beginning of time.

And it touches everyone in some way. Your mother, sister, spouse, partner, friends and family — all who have a uterus and ovaries — will reach menopause. Women can learn to understand how to navigate the ups and downs, and how to future-proof their health for the next thirty to fifty years. It is also important for men to be educated about this stage of life so they can understand and better support the women in their lives.

Menopause: When Does It Start? When Does It End?

It's hard to know when menopause will occur exactly, similar to puberty. Experts provide a range of menopause ages, and according to The Menopause Society (formerly The North American Menopause Society (NAMS)), most will experience menopause between [40 and 58 years old](#). The Women's Health Research Institute at Northwestern University (WHRI) says the menopause transition occurs between the [ages of 35 to 55](#). The Mayo Clinic says menopause can happen in your 40s or 50s. The average age of menopause in Canada is 52.

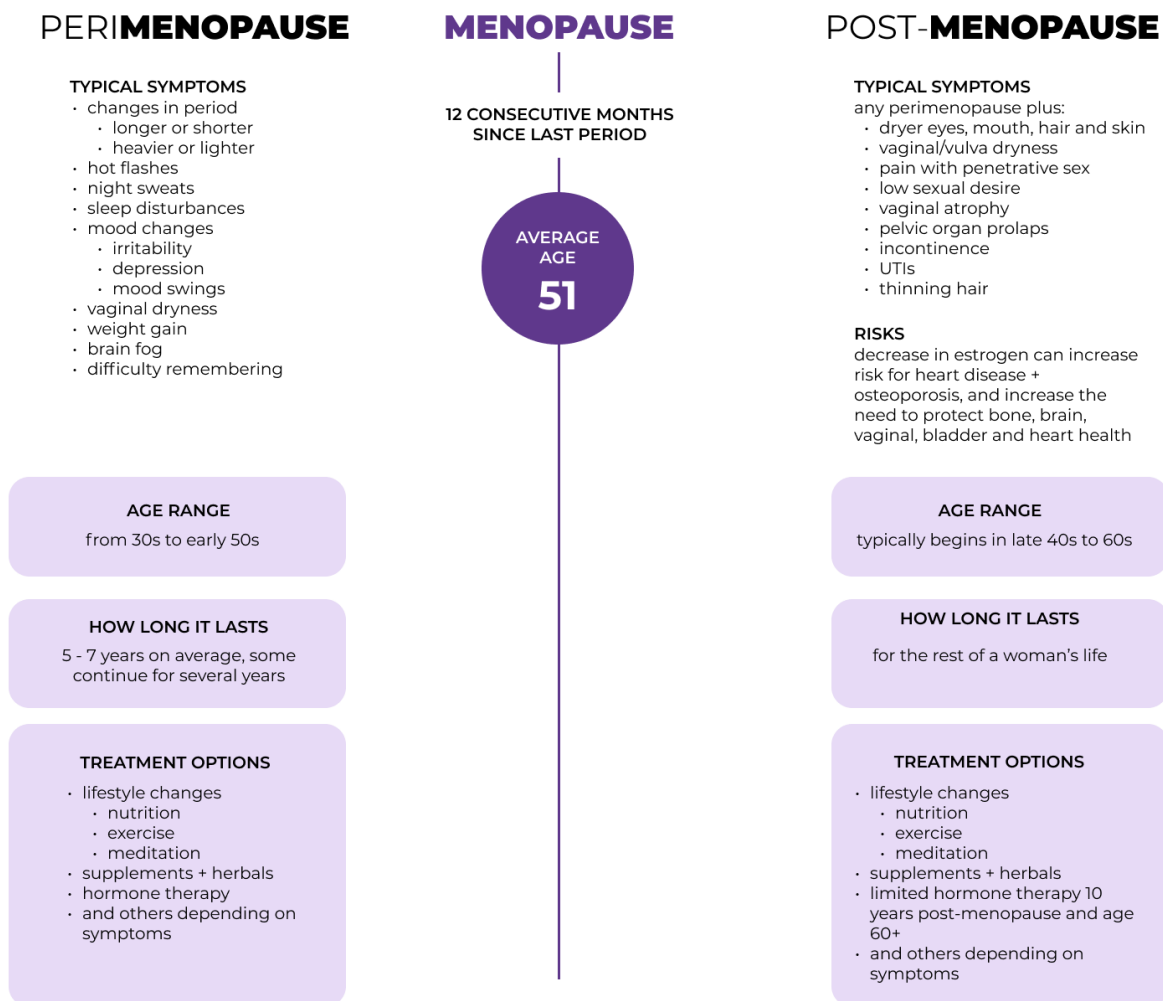
Who's right? Well, they're all right.

What Exactly Is Menopause?

Menopause is an umbrella term that refers to three stages of this midlife transition: perimenopause, menopause, and post-menopause.

Imagine menopause as a finish line. Perimenopause is the lead-up to this finish line. A woman will start to notice changes in her menstrual cycle and/or experience symptoms caused by the fluctuation in estrogen and decline in progesterone. Once they cross the finish line, they are in post-menopause for the rest of their lives.

PHASES OF THE MENOPAUSAL TRANSITION



The 3 Phases Of Menopause

Let's take a closer look at these three phases.

PERIMENOPAUSE:

- typically, changes are noticed in a woman's 40s, but can happen in their 30s
- progesterone (usually lower than normal) is on a decline, and estrogen is fluctuating (usually higher than normal)
- one of the first visible symptoms of hormone changes is with the menstrual cycle – periods can be longer or shorter, a heavier or lighter flow than usual, and the time between each cycle varies and is unpredictable
- there is a general feeling of not "feeling like myself": more tired than usual, feel exceptionally sensitive, moody or depressed
- additional symptoms such as hot flashes, brain fog, poor sleep/insomnia, weight gain, and more may present

MENOPAUSE:

- a one-day event that is 12 consecutive months since their last period
- Induced Menopause is when a medical intervention such as the surgical removal of both ovaries, or when cancer treatments (chemotherapy or pelvic radiation) cause a woman's period to end

POST-MENOPAUSE

- the average age of reaching menopause is 51, however it can be earlier or later
- symptoms that arose during the perimenopause phase may continue, with the addition of new symptoms caused by the steep decline in estrogen that happens post-menopause
- protecting brain, heart, vaginal, bladder and bone health are important once reaching menopause to ensure a healthy, active midlife and beyond

How Long Will It Last?

It is really hard to predict how long the menopause transition will take. Contrary to popular belief, how the transition unfolded for one's mother or sister is not indicative of what their experience will be. Stress levels, environmental factors, and lifestyle choices are different from person to person which impact how every person will experience menopause.

Symptoms can continue for years. Most women can expect to experience the menopause transition from their 40s to their 60s with a varying degree of symptoms and severity.

What You Can Do

Knowledge is power. And informed action makes positive change. If you are or will be experiencing the menopause transition understanding this phase of life will improve your relationship with yourself. And if you are supporting someone during this transition, your knowledge and understanding will make you a pillar of support for them.

Here are three things to help prepare for peri/menopause, and manage midlife health beyond post-menopause:

1. **EDUCATION.** Learn about the symptoms caused by hormonal fluctuation and decline. Not only estrogen and progesterone, but cortisol, testosterone and thyroid cause symptoms that impact midlife health. And the various treatment options available from a holistic approach to hormone therapy, and everything in between. Here are a few quality resources:
 - [The Menopause Society](#) is the leading authority on menopause and menopause care
 - [Menopause Foundation of Canada's](#) mission is to close the menopause knowledge gap
 - [AlterEgo Health](#), a virtual menopause clinic providing access to specialized menopause care, education and community
 - Local Women's clinics.
2. **LIFESTYLE CHOICES.** Having healthy eating, exercise, sleep and stress management habits are going to positively impact the menopausal transition. Getting plenty of exercise, eat whole foods, reduce or remove sugar, alcohol and caffeine consumption, and a mindfulness practice is a great place to start.
3. **SEEK HELP.** Don't wait until symptoms are too hard to handle. The notion of "getting through it" or "dealing with it" should not be an option when there are many treatments available – both hormonal and non-hormonal. Symptoms are communicating an imbalance. Listen and act. Seek out Menopause Society Certified Practitioners who are healthcare professionals with a high level of expertise in the field of menopause and healthy aging.

There are over 10 million women in Canada over 40 years old. They all deserve to feel their best, every day.

WRITTEN BY: Jessica Scattolon, Founder + CEO of AlterEgo Health

DISCLAIMER: The health, fitness and nutritional information and content provided is for general educational and informational purposes only and is not professional medical advice, diagnosis, treatment or care, nor is it intended to be a substitute therefor. If you have any concerns or questions about your health, always seek the advice of a doctor or other qualified health care professional. Do not disregard, avoid or delay in seeking medical advice or treatment from your health care professional because of something you have read here. Please refer to our [Terms of Use](#) for further information on the terms and conditions that govern your use of the website and any material provided therein, including this article.