



Menopause – ‘the change’

Acknowledgements

Jean Hailes for Women's Health acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continued connection to land, waters and culture. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

This resource has been developed in consultation with Greater Western Aboriginal Health Service Penrith (NSW), Kalwun Development Corporation Ltd (Qld), Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services (WA), Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation (NT), Nepean Blue Mountains LHD (NSW), and Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation (Vic.).

We would like to acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who participated in consultations to help shape this resource.

Jean Hailes for Women's Health gratefully acknowledges the support of the Australian Government.

 **Jean Hailes**
for Women's Health

About the artwork

The artwork and illustrations are by Coolamon Creative – a 100% Aboriginal-owned-and-operated creative services agency based in Alice Springs.



“This contemporary artwork represents being at peace amongst change. There are women talking together at the centre, with the yellow dots representing peace around them. It also shows the surrounding elements of environment, the empty waterholes, full waterholes, tracks, flowers, which represents the always changing land, just like our own bodies are always changing. The blue represents water and connecting people to peace.”
– Samantha Campbell, Graphic Designer & Illustrator, Coolamon Creative.

About us

Jean Hailes for Women's Health (Jean Hailes) is a national not-for-profit organisation committed to improving women's health across Australia. We use the latest research to develop our website and resources on a range of topics, such as polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), periods, sex and sexual health, menopause, endometriosis, vulva and vagina, and ovaries and uterus.

We write health information for people with diverse backgrounds, experiences and identities. We use the term 'women', but we acknowledge that this term is not inclusive of all people who may use our content.

 **Jean Hailes**
for Women's Health

Feedback

We welcome all feedback and suggestions on how to improve this presentation.

Send your feedback to education@jeanhailes.org.au



How to use this toolkit

This toolkit has been designed to help health professionals and other health workers educate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women about the importance of staying healthy during and after menopause. The presentation explains what menopause is, why it happens, how to deal with menopausal symptoms and how to stay healthy during and after menopause.

The presentation is available as a hard-copy flip chart. It can also be downloaded electronically, in PDF or PowerPoint format, from jeanhailes.org.au

Using this presentation


Before using the presentation, we recommend you read it in full to ensure you understand it.

The presentation has been developed in consultation with members of Aboriginal communities, but it might not be appropriate for your audience. We recommend you consult with knowledgeable people in the local community, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers, liaison officers or community engagement workers, to ensure it is relevant and culturally appropriate.

Remember that the information in the presentation is considered ‘women’s business’ and is regarded as sensitive and private to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. It should not be shared with or made available to men.

The presentation can be used in group sessions and one-on-one consultations. You may choose to deliver the full presentation, or just a few slides, depending on the type of session and the needs of the audience. The time required to deliver a presentation depends on the needs of the audience. Allow about 20 to 40 minutes to deliver the whole presentation.

When delivering the presentation in a group setting, a private space should be provided for the participants to attend. If you are using a tablet or laptop to deliver the presentation, we recommend printing the facilitator notes to refer to.



Further information

To view and download additional resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, visit jeanhailes.org.au

Presentations

- Health checks
- Periods and the menstrual cycle
- Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)

Booklets

- Health checks
- Menopause – ‘the change’
- Periods
- Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)

Animations

- Periods
- What is PCOS?
- How to stay healthy with PCOS

Poster

- Health checks

Useful websites

Australian Indigenous Health/*InfoNet*
healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au

Jean Hailes for Women’s Health
jeanhailes.org.au

Australian Government Department of
Health and Aged Care
health.gov.au

Australasian Menopause Society
menopause.org.au

Today we will be yarning about 'the change', also called 'menopause'.

We will explain:

- what menopause means
- why it happens
- when it happens
- the symptoms of menopause
- how to deal with the symptoms
- how to take care of your health during and after menopause.

Menopause – ‘the change’

What is menopause?

- Menopause is a time of change in your life. It's when your final period (monthlies, monthly bleeding) happens.
- Menopause is a natural thing. All women go through menopause.

What is menopause?

Menopause – ‘the change’ – is when your periods stop.

All women go through menopause.



When does menopause happen?

- For most women in Australia, menopause happens when they are between 45 and 55 years old.
- For some women, it happens in their 30s or even 20s, but that's not common.
- If your periods stop before you're 45, you need to see your doctor, nurse or Aboriginal Health Worker to check your health.

When does menopause happen?

You'll probably have your final period when you're between 45 and 55 years old.



How to know if menopause has happened?

- You'll know that menopause has happened if you haven't had your period for 12 months.
- If you're using contraception and don't have periods, or if your periods are not regular, it's harder to know if you've reached menopause. Talk to a doctor, nurse or Aboriginal Health Worker about it.

How to know if menopause has happened?

You'll know that menopause has happened if you haven't had your period for 12 months.

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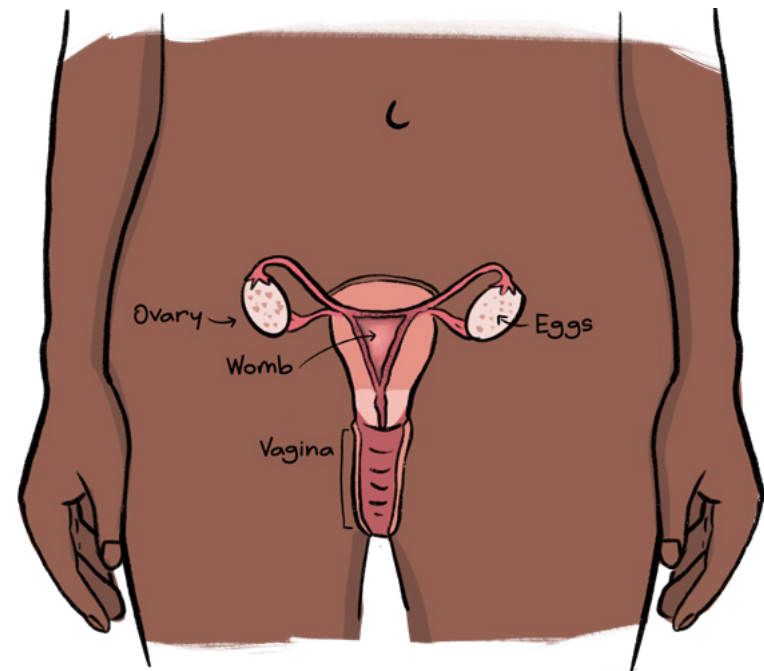
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Why does menopause happen?

- You were born with lots of eggs in your body. You need the eggs to be able to have babies.
- Menopause happens when your body has run out of eggs.
- This means that your periods will stop and you won't be able to become pregnant anymore.

Why does menopause happen?

Menopause happens because your body has run out of eggs.



Changes in periods before menopause

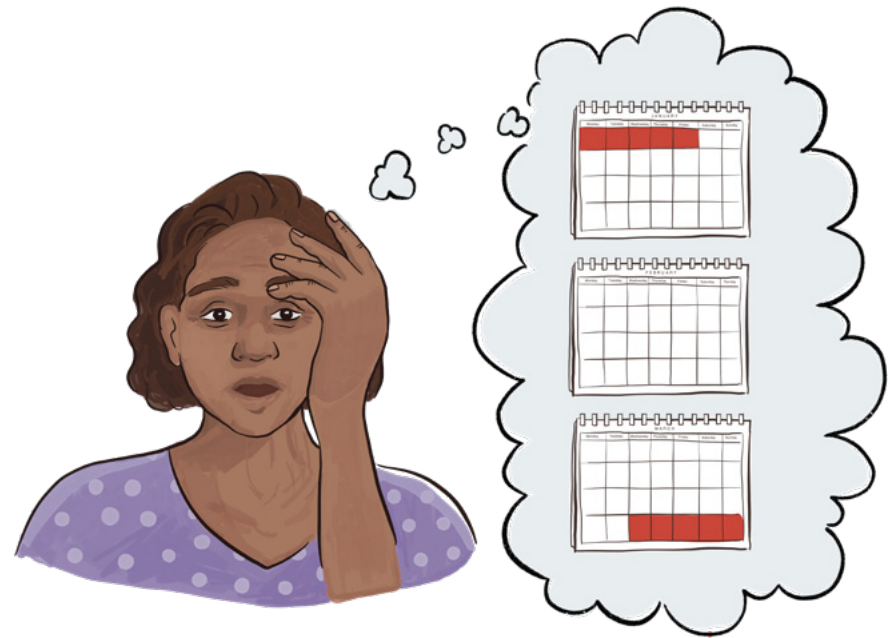
You may notice changes in the pattern of your periods for months or even years before your periods stop completely.

Your periods may:

- come less or more often than before
- become lighter or heavier
- be shorter or longer than usual.

Changes in periods before menopause

You may notice changes in your periods for months before they stop completely.



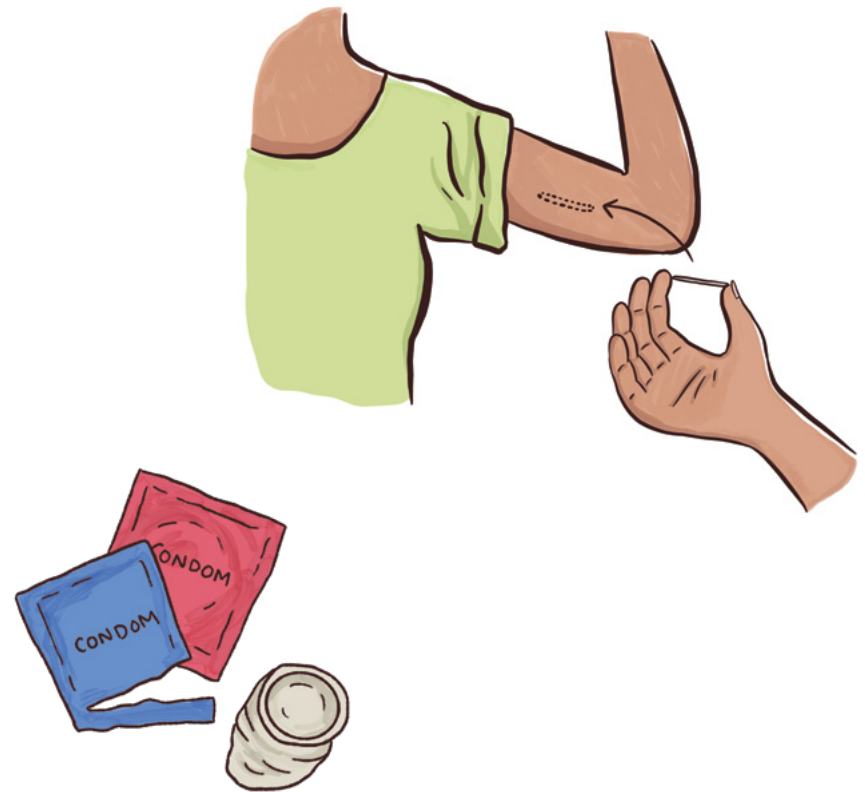
Can you get pregnant around the time of menopause?

- You can still get pregnant before menopause while you're having irregular periods.
- You can also get pregnant up to 2 years after your final period. If you don't want to become pregnant, use contraception.
- Contraception is something you can use if you don't want to get pregnant. For example, condoms, 'the rod', Depo, or the Pill.

Can you get pregnant?

You can still get pregnant up to 2 years after your last period.

If you don't want to get pregnant, use contraception.



Let's yarn about the things you might notice around the time of menopause.



Know the symptoms of menopause

What are the symptoms of menopause?

Around the time of menopause, you may notice changes in your body and how you feel. These changes are the symptoms of menopause. Many women have them.

You may have:

- hot flushes – when you suddenly feel hot and start sweating
- night sweats – when you sweat a lot during the night, making your clothes and bedsheets wet
- a dry vagina, which can make it painful to have sex
- a need to wee more often than usual, including at night
- body aches and pains
- headaches.

Symptoms of menopause

You may have:

- hot flushes
- night sweats
- a dry vagina
- a need to wee more often
- headaches
- body aches and pains.



The symptoms of menopause

You may also:

- feel more tired than usual
- have trouble remembering things
- have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep
- feel really grumpy, worried or unhappy
- gain weight, especially around your belly.

Symptoms of menopause

You may also:

- feel tired
- be forgetful
- have trouble sleeping
- feel grumpy or unhappy
- gain weight.



Do all women have the same symptoms?

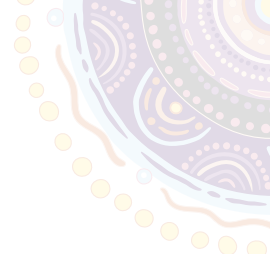
- Menopause is different for every woman.
- You may have no symptoms, you may have only a few symptoms, or you may have symptoms that you find very hard to deal with.
- It might be good to yarn with Elders and Aunties about how they dealt with the change.

Do all women have the same symptoms?

Menopause is different for every woman.



If menopause is bothering you, you can try different things to feel better.



Manage the symptoms of menopause



How to feel better and stay healthy around the time of menopause

- Eat healthy foods – vegetables, fruit, whole grains, lean meats (like kangaroo or chicken), fish, milk and natural yoghurt.
- Limit:
 - sugary foods, such as cakes, cookies, pastries, lollies, chocolates
 - sugary drinks, such as soft drinks, cordials, sports and energy drinks
 - fried foods, such as fries (hot chips), fast-food burgers, chips (crisps).
- Drink plenty of water – aim for 8 cups (2 litres) a day.
- If you drink alcohol, don't drink more than 1 drink a day, for example, a small beer, a small glass of wine or a can or bottle of pre-mixed spirits.
- Try not to smoke. Get help if you want to quit smoking.
- Smoking and alcohol can make your hot flushes and sleep worse.

How to feel better and stay healthy

Eat healthy foods.

Drink plenty of water.

Try not to smoke.



How to feel better and stay healthy around the time of menopause

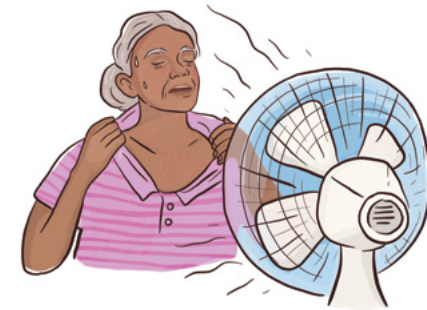
- Be active every day. For example, go for a walk, exercise, work in the garden, swim or dance for at least 30 minutes a day.
- Get about 8 hours of sleep every night.
- Try to stay cool, for example:
 - use fans or air conditioning (if available), hand fans and water sprays
 - wear layers of clothing that you can easily take off when you are hot
 - have cold drinks.
- If sex is painful, use lubricants (lube). Lubricants are special gels, liquids and oils that you can use when having sex. You can get them at the pharmacy, supermarket or at your local clinic.

How to feel better and stay healthy

Be active every day.

Get enough sleep to feel rested.

Stay cool.



How to feel better and stay healthy around the time of menopause

- To help you relax, go fishing, hunting, or get out on country with family.
- Connect with other people – yarn with your family and friends, have a feed together or go for a walk. Spend time with a women's group or your community.

How to feel better and stay healthy

Relax.

Connect with others.



Getting help

If menopause is bothering you and you don't feel good, talk to a doctor, nurse or Aboriginal Health Worker.

There's no shame in talking about it and asking for help.

There are different treatments and medicines that can help you feel better. For example, menopausal hormone therapy (MHT) helps with hot flushes, night sweats and a dry vagina.

If menopause is bothering you

If you're struggling with menopause, talk to a doctor, nurse or Aboriginal Health Worker.

There are different treatments and medicines that can help you feel better.



It's very important that you stay healthy after menopause.

Stay healthy after menopause

Your health after menopause

Your health changes after menopause and you have a higher risk of:

- heart disease – for example, a heart attack or a stroke
- osteoporosis – when your bones become weak and can break more easily
- type 2 diabetes – when there's too much sugar in your blood, which can damage some parts of your body
- dementia – an illness that affects your brain
- some cancers.

It's important to look after yourself after menopause. There are things you can do that will help you stay healthy.

Your health after menopause

Your health changes after menopause, so it's even more important to look after yourself.



How to stay healthy after menopause

- Eat healthy foods and try to keep a healthy weight.
- Be active to help your bones stay strong.
- Limit alcohol.
- Try not to smoke.

How to stay healthy after menopause

Eat healthy food.

Be active.

Limit alcohol.

Try not to smoke.



How to stay healthy after menopause

Have your free 715 health check every year, even if you feel healthy and strong. If a health problem is found early, you can get the right treatment and you'll have a better chance of getting healthy again.

At the 715 health check, the doctor, nurse or Aboriginal Health Worker may:

- check if your blood pressure and blood sugar are good
- check if your bones are still strong
- tell you what tests you should have.

Remember that after menopause you still need regular cervical, breast and bowel cancer screening.

How to stay healthy after menopause

Have your free 715 health check every year.



Remember

1. Menopause is a natural stage of life.
2. If menopause is bothering you, talk to your doctor, nurse or Aboriginal Health Worker.
3. It's important that you stay healthy during and after menopause.



For further information contact

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Disclaimer: This information does not replace medical advice. If a person is worried about their health, they should talk to their doctor or healthcare team.

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