

Menopause information for partners

When your partner goes through menopause, different hormonal changes will affect their body, health, energy levels and mood. They may also have different emotions about coming to the end of their reproductive years.

While every woman's experience is different, it's a good idea to learn about menopause and related symptoms so you can support your partner through this time.

What is menopause?

Menopause is a woman's final menstrual period. It's a normal and healthy part of ageing.

A woman has reached menopause if they haven't had a period for 12 months.

Menopause usually happens between 45 and 55 years of age, but it can happen earlier or later – up to around 60 years. Menopause can happen earlier because of cancer treatment, surgery or other unknown causes.

What is perimenopause?

Perimenopause is the lead-up to menopause. Perimenopause usually starts when a woman is in her 40s. On average, it lasts four to six years, but it can last anywhere from one to 10 years. It's common for women to have physical and emotional symptoms during perimenopause.

What happens at menopause?

During the menopause transition, the levels of female hormones oestrogen and progesterone decline, and the ovaries stop releasing eggs. Your partner can still get pregnant during perimenopause, but not after menopause.

All women experience menopause differently. Some have very few symptoms and others have more severe symptoms that affect their daily life.



Physical symptoms

Your partner may experience a range of physical symptoms around the time of menopause, including:

- hot flushes
- night sweats
- poor sleep
- tiredness
- aches and pains
- loss of sex drive (libido)
- vaginal dryness
- urinary problems
- itchy, crawly or dry skin
- weight gain.

Emotional symptoms

Your partner may also experience different emotional symptoms, such as:

- feeling irritable or frustrated
- feeling anxious
- difficulty concentrating
- forgetfulness
- lowered mood
- mood swings
- feeling they can't cope as well as they used to.

Mood and menopause

One aspect of menopause that you might notice is mood swings. This is caused by changing hormone levels. It's common for women to feel irritable or angry, have a low mood, or even feel depressed or anxious.

You may feel that leaving your partner alone to deal with this is the best approach, but it's important to support them during this time.

Sex and menopause

Women may have a lower sex drive (libido) during menopause. This could be due to many things, including lifestyle and family stresses, changing hormone levels, vaginal dryness (which can cause discomfort during sex) and lowered mood and fatigue.

These changes may make your partner feel anxious about having sex. You can encourage them to take time for themselves (for example, yoga, relaxation or meditation classes). This may help them to feel relaxed and may lift their mood. You can also explore the option of couples counselling.

Dry vagina treatments

Vaginal moisturisers, vaginal oestrogen and menopausal hormone therapy (MHT) can help treat a dry vagina. Lubricants may also help relieve discomfort during sex. Use water-based lubricants, such as Astroglide, Pjur, Yes and KY.

Tips to support your partner

There are many things you can do to help partner through the menopause transition.

For example:

- listen and be supportive
- understand that some (not all) mood changes may be due to menopause
- allow your partner to express their feelings, even if you don't understand them
- ask your partner to help you understand their symptoms
- encourage your partner to talk about what they need and when they need it
- keep an open mind about why your partner may be acting differently
- support your partner to make healthy choices, like eating healthy food and reducing alcohol consumption (which can affect menopausal symptoms)
- be patient when it comes to sex – and find other ways to be intimate
- go with your partner to medical appointments or counselling (if required).

You might also consider counselling if your partner's menopause experience is impacting you.

For more information, visit jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/menopause

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This fact sheet is designed to be informative and educational. It is not intended to provide specific medical advice or replace advice from your medical practitioner.

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Jean Hailes takes a broad and inclusive approach to the topic of women's health. The terms 'women' and 'girls' are used throughout this resource to refer to all women, girls, and gender-diverse people.

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