

Menopause and Perimenopause



- The average of menopause in NZ is 51 years but it can happen earlier, 4% before age 40, 12% between 40 and 45.
- Symptoms of menopause often start before periods stop, a change in your cycle length can be the first clue (shorter or longer)
- Everyone experiences menopause differently but most women have symptoms and most symptoms last between 5 to 10 years

Common symptoms

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Hot flushes● Dizzy spells● Headaches● Depression/Irritability● Anxiety/Mood changes● Sleeplessness● Unusual tiredness | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Joint and muscle pains● Dry skin● Crawling feelings under the skin● Less sexual feelings● Vaginal dryness● Painful sex● Bladder discomfort, an overactive bladder or bladder leakage |
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Treatment options

Lifestyle changes - improving your diet, regular exercise and stopping smoking improve your overall wellbeing making symptoms easier to tolerate. Some psychological therapies such as CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy) and mindfulness may also help.

Complementary therapies - there is currently insufficient evidence to support the use of herbal therapies. Use of phytoestrogens may be helpful but long term data is lacking. The Peruvian plant Maca and St Johns Wort can be beneficial for mood symptoms.

Non-hormonal medications - medications used to treat depression, chronic pain and epilepsy have all been shown to help with some symptoms of the menopause. These are useful for people who can't take hormones or prefer not to.

Menopause hormone therapy (MHT) - MHT is the most effective way of controlling menopausal symptoms whilst also giving other health benefits (improved bone density, reduced risk of dementia, depression, osteoarthritis, type 2 diabetes and heart disease).

Started under the age of 60 or within 10 years of menopause, the benefits of MHT outweigh the risks for most women. There are many different ways of giving hormone therapy. Newer body identical hormones and new ways of giving the medication means risks such as blood clots, stroke and breast cancer are very minimal.

Adapted from information taken from the Australian Menopause Society website