

PERI-MENO WHAT?!

*YOUR GUIDE TO
PERIMENOPAUSE
AND BEYOND*

WOVERSETM
+



FROM THE FOUNDERS

Perimenopause - have you heard of it? We hadn't when it started happening to us. Suffering from perimenopausal symptoms but being unaware of 'perimenopause' was a very confusing time. We put our many physical and psychological changes down too busy, demanding lives.

Our bodies were changing, our skin was changing and all of a sudden we started forgetting things. When the penny finally dropped we were shocked. Why had no-one told us about this?

Why were we so unprepared? Why hadn't we been expecting this? How were we going to deal with it? We had so many questions and we realized just how little we really knew about the whole process of menopause. Talking to friends and family we realized we weren't alone in our confusion. By the year 2025, 1.1 billion women will be menopausal due to women living longer. The average woman can expect to spend 40% of her life in postmenopause.

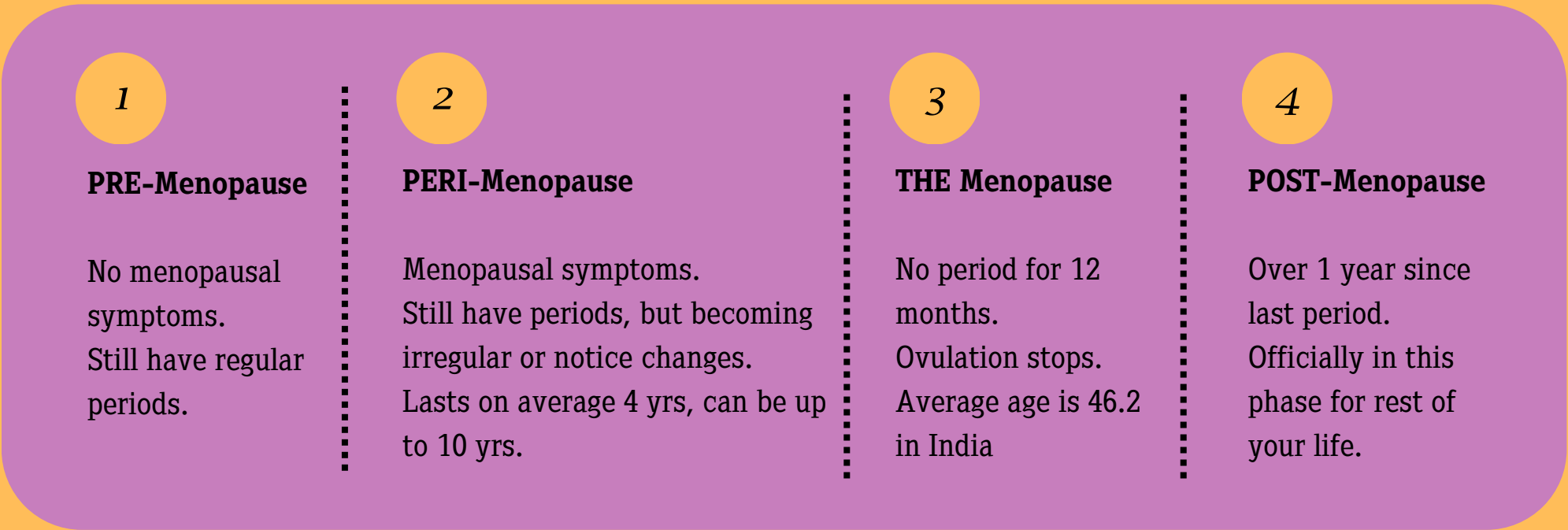
We have created 'Peri-Meno-What?' - Your Guide To Perimenopause and Beyond' to answer some of the questions we had - a manual for the menopause if you like. So hopefully you don't have to be as confused as we were – we hope you find it helpful and if you do, please share it with a friend.

The Stages of MENOPAUSE

Surely I' m too young for menopause?

Like us, you might be one of the many women who weren't prepared for menopause. It's long been associated with women in their 50's, hot flashes and missed periods. The reality is symptoms can start much earlier and there are many more that we should be aware of. Although we use the word "menopause" to describe the whole process, it is actually divided into four different stages.

Perimenopause is the transition stage leading up to the menopause when hormone levels start to fluctuate. This is when symptoms start, often years before your final period. Most women enter this stage in their 40's although it can be earlier or later. For us, gaining a better understanding of the stages of menopause, and the vast number of symptoms, has been life changing. As we spoke more openly to friends and family, we realised we weren't alone.



Medical Menopause

We talk about induced menopause when medical treatments like cancer treatment or surgery to remove the ovaries cause menopause prematurely. Hormone levels change suddenly and dramatically rather than over a period of time as in natural menopause.

PERI MENOPAUSE

Perimenopause is the first stage of menopause when hormone levels start to fluctuate and decline. Every system in our body can be affected by these hormonal changes impacting both our physical and mental health.

Most women enter this phase in their early 40's but it can happen earlier or later. On average the peri-menopause stage lasts for around 4 years, but it can last for up to 10 years. It's during this time that you are very likely to start experiencing menopausal symptoms.

There are over 30 symptoms to be aware of, some of which may take you by surprise. We know that it can be a confusing time trying to understand all of the changes that are happening and not lose your mind in the process.



“

Peri-menopause was a very confusing time for me as I assumed I was too young for menopause - Anita, 40

THE MENOPAUSE

The menopause actually refers to just one day – when you haven't had a period for 12 months you have officially reached menopause. The average age for menopause in India is 46.2. After this you are post-menopausal but can continue to experience symptoms for years after your final period.

POST MENOPAUSE

Post menopause is the time after menopause when a woman hasn't had a period for over a year. You're officially in this stage for the rest of your life.

At this stage many women feel relieved. Think of all the money we will save on sanitary pads?! And while there are many upsides, some women continue to experience symptoms. How these are managed is unique to your experience.

HORMONES

What's going on?

The hormonal shifts we experience in perimenopause are dramatic to say the least. As we head towards menopause, our hormones start to fluctuate and decline. These hormones regulate so many of our bodily functions, it can have a huge impact on our physical and mental health when they are in flux. So what are these hormones, what do they do and what happens when they start to decline?

Oestrogen

Helps regulate menstruation, the reproductive system, brain function, nerves and bone growth. In menopause, when our ovaries stop producing as much oestrogen, the affects can be significant. Low oestrogen affects our mood, our nerves, loss of skin elasticity, our joints and hearts. It can affect temperature regulation and cause vaginal and skin dryness.

Progesterone

Plays a key role in the menstrual cycle alongside oestrogen and prepares the lining of the womb for a fertilised egg. Production stops during the menstrual cycle and it declines in perimeopause, eventually stopping after menopause. Symptoms of low progesterone can include irregular cycles, mood changes, sleep disturbances, anxiety and feelings of depression.

Testosterone

Often seen as the "male hormone" but plays a key role in the female body too. Important for libido, maintaining muscle and bone strength and cognitive function. Testosterone declines slowly in menopause and can impact mood, cognitive function and libido.

Oxytocin

Also known as the "love hormone", oxytocin sends messages to the brain controlling key aspects of the reproductive system from child birth to sex drive. Levels decline in menopause which is linked to reduced libido, vaginal dryness and low mood.



Lets TALK Symptoms

The menopause isn't all hot flashes and missed periods, there is a whole range of symptoms ranging from physical to psychological. There is no one size fits all with the menopause and every woman will experience it differently. Symptoms can also come and go, some can be debilitating and severely affect your life while some can be quite subtle. The important thing is to be aware.

physical

- Hot flashes
- Irregular periods
- Night sweats
- Breast tenderness
- Decreased libido
- Vaginal dryness
- Headaches
- Burning mouth
- Change in taste
- Fatigue
- Bloating
- Joint pain
- Muscle tension and aches
- Sleep disturbances
- Weight gain
- Electric shock sensations
- Digestive issues
- Changes in body odour
- Dizziness
- Stress
- Incontinence
- Osteoporosis
- Heart palpitations
- Allergies

skin & hair

- Dry skin
- Acne
- Age Spots/Pigmentation
- Itchy skin
- Hair loss
- Brittle nails
- Skin bruise easily
- Facial hair
- Jowls, Slack skin & wrinkles
- Rashes & irritated skin
- Wounds heal slowly
- Crow feet, puffiness and dark circles around eyes
- Skin barrier weakens

psychological

- Mood swings
- Anxiety or panic attacks
- Difficulty concentrating
- Brain fog/Memory problems
- Irritability
- Feeling unhappy or depressed

MENOPAUSE and periods



When we think of menopause, hot flashes and missed periods are often the first symptoms that come to mind. However, changes in your cycle are often one of the earlier signs you should be aware of. With perimenopause there really is no one size fits all. One woman's experience is very different to another. Here are some of the changes to look out for.

Closer together

OR Further apart

The length of time between periods can vary from month to month. Some months you might get periods back to back. In other months, you might go more than four weeks without getting a period.

Lighter

Your bleeding might become much lighter. Sometimes the spotting is so faint that it doesn't even look like a period.

HEAVIER

You may bleed a lot and your periods could become much heavier than before with some women experiencing heavy flooding. These can leave you feeling tired and worn out.

Irregular

Rather than having a regular period once every 28 days, you might get them less or more often.

Short

OR Long

The duration of your periods can change, too. You might bleed for just a day or two or for more than a week at a time.

MISSED

Some months you might not get a period at all.

'I started to think I was perimenopausal when....'

The realization that you might be perimenopausal can kind of creep up on you. We asked our WOVERSE Community to share what symptom(s) got them thinking that they were perimenopausal.

...when my husband offered to make me some lunch and all I could do was scream at him. Didn't seem like a rational response

-Natasha, 44

...when my periods became irregular, I found myself flying off the handle over any little thing and became highly irritable. I was more forgetful and I started getting breakouts again.

-Amina, 42

...when everyday felt like my period was due

-Pooja, 44

...when I could not get rid of my belly bloat! I had a flat belly all my life then boom

-Jane, 40

...when I had constant, extreme fatigue

-Sonia, 42

...when my skin started to be so dry it would almost drink moisturiser and still stay dry'

-Ria, 38

...when my predictable hormonal migraines started to strike much more frequently and for much longer periods of time

-Seema, 39

when I started having night sweats as well as wondering if I had left my mind in a broom cupboard somewhere

-Shymla, 49

MENOPAUSE and skin

Lots of guides and advice around menopause and skin tend to be aimed at women in their fifties and sixties, however the truth is we often see signs of the menopause in our skin much earlier in our forties and even late thirties. This comes as an unwelcome surprise to many women, who are suddenly dealing with signs of ageing and unpleasant changes to their skin unexpectedly.

What happens to our skin during menopause?

One thing to be clear on about menopause is that it affects the health and appearance of our skin in multiple different ways and can be quite unique to each person.

As peri-menopause and menopause occurs, our hormone levels begin to fluctuate wildly. This has a knock-on effect on our skin, which starts to show signs of the internal turmoil within. You might experience breakouts and acne for the first time in over a decade – or develop conditions such as eczema and rosacea. Skin also starts to show its age – we begin to see more visible lines as wrinkles deepen and skin starts to sag as it loses elasticity.

Many of these symptoms and conditions are caused by hormonal changes, as well as natural reduction in collagen production, a reduction in cell turnover and skin thickness.

During menopause, dropping oestrogen levels mean our bodies also start to dry out, which extends to our skin. Many women report feeling skin has lost its plumpness and vitality – it feels tight, sensitive and much more prone to dryness. Oestrogen levels have a huge impact on the moisture levels within our skin, so excess dryness is probably the most common skin change which continues beyond the menopause.

What can I do to support my skin during menopause?

Navigating the wealth of advice and product recommendations for menopausal skin can feel overwhelming – so start by taking simple baby steps which will help you to feel better straight away without giving in to confusion or spending lots of money on lotions and potions without a clue what they do, or whether they're good for you. Firstly – review your skincare routine. I can't stress this enough. As your body changes, your skincare routine may need to change too (or you'll need to

introduce one, if you haven't already!) Focus on getting the basics right and introduce nourishing, hydrating ingredients into your regime – think hyaluronic acid, ceramides and squalene. Your skin might not need a thick rich cream if you are prone to spots, so think hydration without the heavy texture. Avoid overusing acids and peels that can strip the skin; I love acids and peels. They can be quite skin changing for the better, but you may have been able to get away with being more ruthless and slap dash in your twenties and thirties with these types of ingredients, now is the time for more of a combined approach; with more hydrating skincare in conjunction with the power packing actives. Take advice and treatments from a well trained professional when it comes to peels. Collagen stimulating products are also a must to combat loss of firmness and fine lines – so adding peptides and retinoids to your regime is also a huge support.



Review your skincare routine. I can 't stress this enough.

It's also important to concentrate on skin health from the inside out, which starts with good gut health, balanced nutrition and hydration



**Skincare
designed
with your
hormones
in mind.**

30% of collagen will be lost in the first 5 years of menopause.

As collagen levels decline, skin will become drier and thinner with a weakened skin barrier, more sensitive and less radiant.

LIFESTYLE

in Perimenopause

Going through the menopause can be tough, we know. There is a whole range of menopausal symptoms - physical and psychological that can affect our wellbeing.

The truth is there is a lot we can do to help us cope better and ease our symptoms through adopting a holistic lifestyle approach to the menopause. A healthier lifestyle can also help maintain bone density and reduce the risk of heart disease.

Protein

Not only does it help retain lean muscle mass lean protein keeps you fuller for longer. Good sources of lean protein include chicken, eggs, fish and seafood, Amaranth and quinoa, tofu, greek yogurt, bean, pulses and lentils, nuts.

FOCUS ON FIBRE

Make sure you eat wholegrains in your diet for fibre – wholegrain cereals, bread, lentils, chick peas and beans

NUTRITION

Good nutrition can help alleviate menopausal symptoms. Try to eat a variety of foods to get all the nutrients you need. When we feel low in energy and mood it can be tempting to reach for sugar or carbs for an instant hit - but this can leave you feeling worse. A sharp rise in glucose levels can lead to a sharp dip soon after. To avoid these crashes and keep blood sugar levels even, look to adopt a healthy, balanced diet in perimenopause.

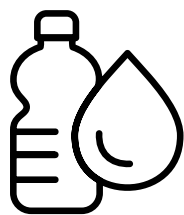
Get enough calcium

Calcium is important for bone health which can be impacted by menopause so try to incorporate calcium into your daily diet. Aim for 2-3 servings a day. Calcium is found in dairy products, seeds, sardines, salmon and leafy green vegetables.

Fruit and vegetables

Fruit and vegetables provide antioxidants that protect the heart. Aim for a minimum of 5 a day in a variety of colours.

Hydrate



Aim to drink 2 litres of water a day to stay hydrated. This will help your skin maintain moisture and increase elasticity.

Alcohol and caffeine



It is easy to reach for another glass of wine to unwind in the evening or another cup of coffee to get you going in the morning but caffeine and alcohol are known to make menopausal symptoms worse. Cut back entirely or keep to sensible limits.

OMEGA 3

Omega 3 fatty acids have been associated with decreased inflammation and can help support mental and physical health. Oily fish and flaxseeds are excellent sources.

MAKE A MOVE



Taking regular exercise can help alleviate menopausal symptoms - boosting your mood as well as your long-term health. Adopt a mix of cardiovascular, strength training, balance and flexibility in perimenopause.

STRENGTH TRAINING

Muscle-building exercise is particularly important in menopause when bone and muscle mass can weaken. Try to do two sessions a week in perimenopause.

Cardio Activity

gets your heart rate up and makes your lungs work harder. Brisk walking, cycling, running, and dancing are all great cardio activities.

YOGA AND RELAXATION

It is important to keep working on flexibility and yoga is a great way to improve balance and flexibility. It also helps with relaxation and improved mental health.



GET ENOUGH REST

Going through the menopause can take a huge toll on you mentally and physically. It's so important to take care of yourself and make time for rest and relaxation. Meditation, mindfulness and yoga are all great ways to promote relaxation. Make your wellbeing a priority and allow yourself to take time for self-care.

STAY CONNECTED

It's good to talk.

The perimenopause sparked a whole new conversation for us as friends and confiding in each other helped us to connect the dots and figure out what was happening to us. We weren't expecting menopause in our 40's, we thought we were far too young for that. Turns out, we're not. When we started to talk to friends and family we realized that we weren't the only ones. We heard so many similar stories of confusion and frustration but mostly we all felt better for sharing.

W_♀OVERSE has created an amazing community for women where you can have conversation in our private Facebook group '**Indian Women Midlife Journey**'. It's a place where we can share information, educate ourselves, support one another and throw in a few laughs as well.

We would love for you to join our facebook group

 @indianwomenmidlifejourney

and stay social with us on

 @womencare.woverse

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