

# Overview

## Menopause

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Menopause is when a woman stops having periods completely. It is a natural part of ageing.

Your periods stop due to lower hormone levels. This usually happens between the ages of 45 and 55. The average age in Ireland for a woman to reach menopause is 51. You reach menopause when you have not had a period for 12 months.

Periods usually start to become less frequent over a few years before they stop. Sometimes they can stop suddenly. In some women, periods can become very heavy in the year coming up to menopause.

## Perimenopause

Perimenopause is when you have [symptoms](#) before your periods have stopped completely. Symptoms can start 7 to 10 years before your periods stop.

[Things you can do to help with symptoms](#)

## Early menopause

If you experience menopause before 45 years of age, this is called premature or early menopause.

Learn more about [early menopause](#)

## Premature ovarian insufficiency

Around 1 in 100 women experience menopause before 40 years of age. This is known as premature ovarian insufficiency.

## Symptoms of menopause and perimenopause

Symptoms usually start several years before your periods stop. Symptoms can also last for some time after your periods stop.

Most women will experience perimenopause and menopause symptoms. Some of these can be severe and have a big impact on your everyday activities.

The length and severity of these symptoms can vary from woman to woman. Every woman experiences menopause differently.

[Common symptoms of menopause and perimenopause](#)

## When to contact your GP

### Talk to your GP if :

- you have menopause or perimenopause symptoms that are worrying you
- you're experiencing symptoms before age 45
- your periods have stopped for a year or more before age 45

Your GP can usually confirm if you're menopausal based on your symptoms. They may suggest a blood test to check your hormone levels.

They may refer you to a specialist clinic if:

- treatment does not help your symptoms
- you have ongoing troublesome side effects after treatment
- you cannot have HRT
- you have a complex medical history

These specialist complex menopause clinics are in The National Maternity Hospital, The Rotunda Hospital, The Coombe Hospital, Cork University Maternity Hospital, University Hospital Galway and Nenagh General Hospital Women's Health Hub.

## HRT and other treatment

Talk to your GP if you're finding your symptoms particularly difficult. They will be able to help you and can recommend treatments.

These may include:

- [hormone replacement therapy \(HRT\)](#) - tablets, skin patches, gels and sprays that help menopausal symptoms by replacing oestrogen
- vaginal oestrogen cream, tablets, gels, or pessaries
- lubricants or moisturisers for vaginal dryness
- [cognitive behavioural therapy \(CBT\)](#) - a type of talking therapy that can help with low mood, anxiety, flushes, sweats and sleep

- eating a [healthy, balanced diet](#) and exercising regularly can improve some menopausal symptoms

Your GP may refer you to a [menopause specialist](#).

There are also [things you can do to help with your perimenopause and menopause symptoms](#).

Learn about [HRT and other treatments for menopause](#)

## Causes of menopause

As you get older there is a change in the balance of the body's sex hormones. This change causes menopause.

It happens when your ovaries produce less oestrogen (a hormone) and no longer release an egg each month.

Premature or early menopause can happen at any age, and often there's no clear cause.

Sometimes it's caused by:

- a treatment such as surgery to remove the ovaries (oophorectomy)
- some breast cancer treatments
- chemotherapy or radiotherapy
- an underlying medical condition, such as Down syndrome or Addison's disease

## Contraception and menopause

Hormonal contraception can affect your periods so you may not know for sure if you have reached menopause when you're on the contraceptive pill.

Learn more about [contraception and menopause](#)

## Screening and menopause

Keep up to date with your screening tests and appointments during and after menopause.

These are:

- [cervical screening](#) (age 25 to 65)
- [breast screening](#) (between age 50 and 69)
- [bowel screening](#) (from age 59 to 69)

# Sláintecare.

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