



Perimenopause & Menopause Information Pack

healthwatch
Middlesbrough

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Redcar and Cleveland

What is Perimenopause?

Each woman's experience is different, during perimenopause, most women will find it more difficult to become pregnant and may get irregular or heavy periods. The perimenopause begins some years before the menopause itself as the body gradually begins to produce less of the hormone oestrogen. It usually starts a few years before a woman's last period, when she's in her 40s, but it can sometimes start earlier.

What is Menopause

The menopause is when a woman stops having her period, once a woman hasn't had a period for a full year she is classed as post menopause but symptoms can still happen. Less and less oestrogen is produced, causing the body to behave differently. The body does not stop producing oestrogen overnight, and the process can take several years. It is something that all women go through. Menopause usually occurs between the ages of 45-55; women of colour are estimated to go through menopause 8 ½ months earlier than white woman.

Common Symptoms

- Allergies
- Anxiety
- Body odour
- Breast tenderness
- Brittle nails
- Dry mouth
- Other digestive changes
- Panic attacks
- Changes in taste
- Decreased libido
- Depression
- Difficulty concentrating
- Dizziness
- Electric shock sensations
- Sleep disturbance
- Stress incontinence
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Hot flushes
- Irregular heartbeat
- Irregular periods
- Irritability
- Itchiness
- Thinning hair
- Tinglingly sensations
- Joint Pain
- Memory Lapses
- Mood changes
- Muscle aches
- Night sweats
- Osteoporosis
- Vaginal dryness
- Weight gain

Top Tips

Educate yourself - the more you know about what they are experiencing the better.

Try not to put any undue pressure - whilst it can be a confusing time this is not the time to be making big decisions.

Ask them what they need - it can be really tricky to know what they need when they are struggling physically and emotionally.

Accept the silence - many people say they just need a period of quiet for self-reflection, this is not to push anyone away.

Resist the urge to snap back - easier said than done, but it's important to understand that fluctuating oestrogen levels influence the neuro receptors in the brain.

Encourage them to seek help - for some, just making the appointment can be a major hurdle, anxiety during menopause can be crippling and self-confidence can just melt away. It can be so helpful to have someone with you for support when you sit down in front of your doctor.

Be prepared to change plans - many people struggle with self-confidence during perimenopause and when coupled with crashing fatigue, they may not always be able to face doing things.

Communication is key - perimenopause has often been referred to as the change of life and in so many ways it is, but it has an impact both physically and emotionally on us all but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't be able to look forward to long, happy, healthy, fulfilling lives.

Sources of Information and Support

- www.nice.org.uk - menopause guidance
- www.womens-health-concern.org
- www.themenopausecharity.org
- www.perimenopausesupport.co.uk
- www.balance-menopause.com
- www.themenopausecharity.org
- <https://www.verywellhealth.com/menopause-worse-for-african-american-women-3522485>
- <https://diverseinds.co.uk/black-women-in-menopause/>
- Private Facebook Group Perimenopause Support UK - ability to post anonymously, will not appear in your newsfeed

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