

Perimenopause & Menopause

Remember: perimenopause can start in your late 30s or 40s and last for years before your periods stop. Menopause is officially 12 months without a period. Hormone shifts affect your brain as much as your body, so if you've been feeling "not like yourself," there may be a real reason.

What it can actually look like

It's not just hot flashes. Check any that sound familiar.

- ☐ Anxiety or panic that seems to come from nowhere
- ☐ Brain fog, losing words, walking into rooms and forgetting why
- ☐ Night sweats or hot flashes
- ☐ Low mood, tearfulness, losing interest in things
- ☐ Achy joints, headaches, or migraines
- ☐ Feeling exhausted no matter how much you rest
- ☐ Irritability or rage that surprises you
- ☐ Waking at 2–4 a.m. and can't fall back asleep
- ☐ Heart racing or fluttering
- ☐ Periods changing: heavier, closer together, or skipped
- ☐ Less patience for noise, clutter, or people
- ☐ Less interest in intimacy

Why it's missed

These symptoms often get called "just stress," "just depression," or "just getting older." Women with a history of PMS/PMDD or postpartum depression can be more sensitive to these shifts.

Before your appointment

Track your symptoms and cycle for 2–3 months. Then ask directly: **"Could this be perimenopause?"** Ask about both hormonal and non-hormonal options.

Talk with your doctor or a counselor if:

- Symptoms are disrupting your sleep, work, marriage, or parenting
- You've felt down, anxious, or numb most days for 2 weeks or more
- You don't recognize yourself, and you're tired of being told it's "normal"

See a doctor promptly if you have

- Very heavy bleeding (soaking a pad or tampon every hour) or any bleeding after menopause
- Chest pain, fainting, or palpitations with shortness of breath. Call 911.
- Thoughts of not wanting to be here. Call or text 988.

Tip: not every provider is trained in menopause care. If you feel dismissed, you're allowed to get a second opinion. The Menopause Society lists certified practitioners at menopause.org.

"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

PSALM 139:14