

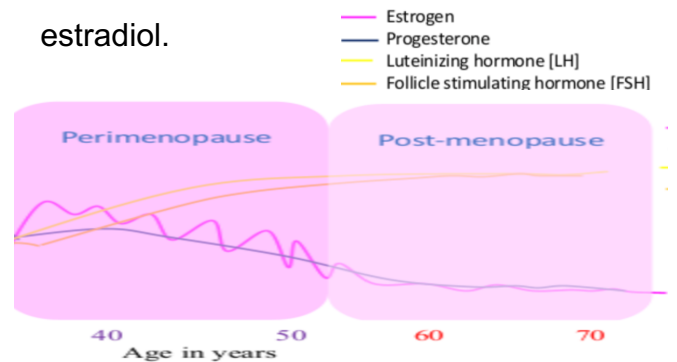


This factsheet describes common cognitive changes (i.e., brain fog, changes in thinking skills, and memory) that women may experience during menopause as well as practical management strategies.

What is Menopause?

Natural menopause occurs 12 months after your final menstrual period. The average age of menopause is around 51 years. Menopausal stages including pre-menopause, perimenopause (transitional period before menopause), early post-menopause, and late post-menopause, can be defined based on i) menstrual cycle patterns, and ii) hormone levels.

Menopause involves hormonal changes that can be the main cause of menopause symptoms, characterized by fluctuations and then a decline in estradiol.



Every woman's experience of menopause is different, and some may experience symptoms for 5-10 years. Menopause symptoms can be diverse, frequently reported symptoms include:

Vasomotor /Sexual	Neurological, Psychological	Physical
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Hot flashes ❑ Night sweats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Sleeplessness ❑ Depression ❑ Anxiety ❑ Irritability ❑ Mood changes ❑ Brain fog 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Unusual tiredness ❑ Joint pains ❑ Headaches ❑ Muscle pains ❑ Dry skin ❑ Urinary frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Dry vagina ❑ Reduced libido ❑ Uncomfortable intercourse 		



What are Typical Cognitive Changes?

Cognitive symptoms (i.e., 'brain fog' or 'cognitive complaints') can be further exacerbated by the above listed symptoms and are experienced in up to 65% of menopausal women. The experience of cognitive symptoms during menopause can vary widely, from fleeting and mild to significantly impacting work and daily life. Current evidence suggests that these changes are temporary, with cognitive improvements in postmenopausal years.

Cognitive symptoms can have various representations, typical ones include:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Poor memory (forgetfulness) ❑ Difficulty concentrating (losing track when reading or listening) ❑ Decreased verbal fluency (on the tip of the tongue) ❑ Mental fatigue (fuzzy brain) ❑ Difficulty multi-tasking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Decreased planning or organizational ability (misplacing things) ❑ Increased procrastination or time blindness (difficulty sticking to schedules, estimating and recognizing time) ❑ Decreased complex/abstract thinking (difficulty conducting abstract reasoning) |
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PRACTICAL TIPS

- ❑ Plan out a weekly routine, ensuring that time is set aside for exercise and enjoyable activities;
- ❑ Make a to-do list and ensure tasks are broken down into achievable steps;
- ❑ Take the time to enter different steps from the items in your to-do list into your diary or calendar;
- ❑ Use calendar reminders to keep you on task and on time;
- ❑ Complete only one task at a time and take breaks;
- ❑ Take notes or ask people to email you important information, rather than trying to rely on your memory;
- ❑ Stay socially active, spend time with friends and families;
- ❑ Actively seek support from friends, families, and health professionals.



LIFESTYLE TIPS

- ❑ Exercise regularly (e.g., aerobic exercise, and Yoga), and get some fresh air;
- ❑ Practice mindfulness and meditation to help reduce stress (e.g., focused breathing, walking meditation);
- ❑ Keep your brain active in any way you enjoy (this can include learning new information through reading or listening to podcasts);
- ❑ Follow a Mediterranean diet, with lots of healthy plant-based foods, such as whole grains, fruits, vegetables, beans, legumes, nuts and seeds, with moderate amounts of seafood, poultry, and eggs;
- ❑ Avoid drinking excessive amounts of alcohol and smoking;
- ❑ If you are concerned about your cognitive changes or are continuously bothered by menopause symptoms, talk to your doctor, and ask if menopausal hormone treatment could be helpful for you.



Additional Resources

The current evidence on certain management options, such as menopausal hormone treatment, is mixed. The following resources may offer a better understanding of relevant evidence-based strategies.

- ❑ Australasian Menopause Society
 - Menopause definitions <https://www.menopause.org.au/hp/management/menopause-basics>
 - Menopause treatment options <https://www.menopause.org.au/hp/management/treatment-options>
 - Menopausal hormone therapies <https://www.menopause.org.au/health-info/fact-sheets/what-is-menopausal-hormone-therapy-mht-and-is-it-safe>
 - Lifestyle or behavioural modifications <https://www.menopause.org.au/hp/information-sheets/lifestyle-and-behavioural-modifications-for-menopausal-symptoms>
- ❑ HER Centre Australia - Latest research in menopause <https://www.monash.edu/medicine/her-centre/research>
- ❑ Jean Hailes for Women's Health - Health topics in women <https://www.jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z>