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The Menopause Transition

What is Perimenopause?

Perimenopause is the 7–10 years before menopause during which your menstrual cycle may begin to change. These changes are often related to reduced frequency of ovulation and declining progesterone levels. Estrogen also begins to fluctuate more wildly.

Each woman's experience of perimenopause is unique, influenced by health status, genetics, and lifestyle factors. Some women have mild symptoms, while others may experience significant changes.

Recent research shows that perimenopause is a critical window for long-term health.

Common Symptoms

You might encounter a variety of symptoms, such as:

- Heightened anxiety or a low mood
- Insomnia or sleep disturbances
- Tender or painful breasts
- Depression or irritability
- Heart palpitations
- Night sweats and hot flashes
- Migraines or headaches
- Extremely heavy or irregular periods

What is Menopause?

Menopause is defined as having gone 12 consecutive months without a menstrual period. It typically marks the end of reproductive years and can last for an average of 7 years or more, referring to the duration of symptoms that follow.

Some women experience minimal symptoms, while others may find this phase more challenging. Understanding what's happening helps you support your body during this time.

Why This Stage Matters

Perimenopause and menopause can span a third of a woman's life. Gaining insight into this transition empowers you to take supportive steps in your lifestyle and healthcare decisions.

Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) can play an important role, but first, we must build strong foundations in key areas of our health:

Gut Health

- A healthy gut microbiome supports hormone detoxification through a group of bacteria known as the estrobolome, which helps metabolize estrogen.
- Regular bowel movements (1–3 times daily) are essential. Without them, estrogen can be reabsorbed and add strain to the liver, increasing the risk of estrogen dominance.

Stress & Adrenal Support

- As ovarian estrogen production declines, your adrenal glands help produce small amounts of estrogen.
- Chronic stress diverts adrenal resources to make cortisol, leaving less capacity for hormone production.
- Gentle stress management practices like daily walks, quiet tea time, or journaling can help balance your stress response. Meditation and Yoga are effective tools

Alcohol, Caffeine & Sleep

- Both substances can impair sleep, worsen hot flashes, and burden liver detox pathways.
- Reducing or eliminating them during this time may significantly improve sleep quality and hormonal balance.

Protein & Blood Sugar Balance

- Protein helps regulate blood sugar, curb cravings, and preserve muscle mass.
- Aim for 1.8–2.0g of protein per kilogram of body weight per day. Start with a high-protein breakfast.
- Aging and hormonal decline increase muscle loss risk, so protein is essential for strength and disease prevention.

Carbohydrates & Timing

- Include complex, plant-based carbs in the evening to lower nighttime cortisol and support restful sleep.
- Prioritize fiber-rich carbs to support gut health and insulin sensitivity.
- Avoid simple, processed carbs that spike insulin and may trigger hot flashes.

Exercise & Strength

- Focus on maintaining or building muscle through strength training.
- Research supports including: resistance and heavy lifting, high-intensity interval training, and short intervals every week.
- Exercise improves metabolism, supports bone density, and helps manage body composition.

Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)

HRT supports the brain (memory, mood, cognitive function), the heart (cardiovascular protection), bones (osteoporosis prevention), and more.

When started within 10 years of menopause or before age 60, HRT is considered safe for most women and can provide long-term benefits.

Still, it's important to continue supporting lifestyle factors like gut health, stress management, and nutrition while using HRT.