

**Canadian Menopause Coalition**

**Media Backgrounder**

***What is Menopause?***

As women leave the reproductive stage of their lives, they move through perimenopause, and then reach menopause itself. Menopause is a natural part of aging and is, technically, the point when a woman has had no menstrual period for 12 consecutive months due to natural aging or as a result of surgery. So it is not technically correct to say that a woman is “going through” menopause. Once she has reached this milestone, all of the time afterward is post-menopause. *Perimenopause* is the time period leading up to menopause.

Women can experience perimenopausal symptoms (the physical and emotional changes that hint that menopause is on its way) in their 30s and 40s, while others are well into their 50s before their menstrual cycle alters and they can no longer conceive. The majority of women experience the physical and emotional changes of perimenopause in their late 40s or early 50s when:

- their monthly cycle begins to change (e.g. irregular timing and intensity);
- estrogen and progesterone production becomes unpredictable; and
- the number of stored eggs in the ovaries decreases.

The physical and emotional changes women experience during this time in their lives is directly related to the diminishing level of the hormones in their bodies.

***What is "induced" menopause?***

Some women experience a sudden or premature menopause in relation to health complications such as cancer treatments, ovarian malfunction and the surgical removal of ovaries. Because the ovaries no longer produce the hormones estrogen, progesterone and testosterone, these women experience "induced", "sudden" or "surgical" menopause.

Women going through induced menopause may have more severe menopausal symptoms, and are usually treated with hormone therapy.

***Symptoms***

No two women experience menopause in the same way. Sometimes these symptoms get in the way of normal day-to-day life, while for other women, they are hardly noticeable.

Generally, however, fluctuating hormone levels may lead to:

- irregular periods
- night sweats
- hot flashes
- fatigue
- aches and pains
- a change in sexual desire
- changes to skin texture and appearance
- bladder control difficulty
- vaginal fluid changes (dryness)

- disruption of sleep patterns (difficulty sleeping)
- mood swings
- memory loss

### ***Meeting menopause head on***

As the regular cycle of reproductive hormones (estrogen and progesterone) that delivers the potential for fertility and a regular menstrual cycle slows down, women enter a phase of their lives that can be both challenging and revitalizing. Yet, every woman experiences menopause differently.

Thanks to medical advances and more open communications about health issues, women can sustain their quality of life and manage symptoms more effectively these days. Women are taking charge of their lives and finding information and support from many sources. Our country's health care providers and researchers have access to the most up-to-date information about the changes women will come across, both physically and emotionally, and they know how to offer support and treat menopause symptoms. The Canadian Menopause Coalition is dedicated to working together to ensure women in Canada have access to the best possible care, and evidence-based information to help them make good decisions about their health at midlife.

Treatments include a variety of preventative, lifestyle and treatment approaches, along with more traditional options like hormone replacement, cognitive and or alternative therapies.

Menopause – it's a time for change, reflection and action by women in Canada. It's also a time to seek out quality information and support, and to be open to all of the possibilities offered by this important transition in a woman's life.

Good quality resources about menopause can be found at:

[canadianmenopausecoalition.ca](http://canadianmenopausecoalition.ca)

[www.menopauseandu.ca](http://www.menopauseandu.ca)

[www.menopause.org](http://www.menopause.org)

[www.sexualityandu.ca](http://www.sexualityandu.ca)

[www.sogc.org](http://www.sogc.org)

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/menopause/DS00119>

<http://womenshealthmatters.ca/>

<http://www.womenshealth.gov/menopause/resources/>

### **For more Information**

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