

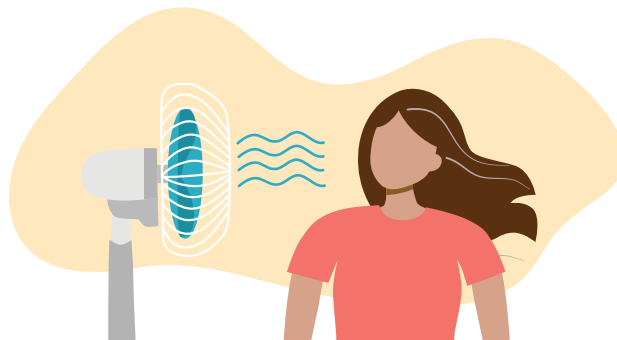
## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF MENOPAUSE?

Symptoms vary for each person. You may have sudden symptoms that occur only occasionally or that occur more often.

In addition to irregular periods, you may have:

- Hot flashes
- Sleep problems
- Night sweats
- Mood changes
- Vaginal dryness, making sexual activity uncomfortable or painful
- Changes in interest in sexual activity
- Weight gain
- Thinning hair and dry skin
- Loss of breast/chest fullness
- Anxiety or depression

These symptoms could be worse for those who have posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Talk to your VA primary care provider if you are experiencing mental health concerns. Treatment options are available and effective.



## Women Veterans Call Center

The Women Veterans Call Center (WVCC) is your guide to VA. All calls are answered by women, many of whom are Veterans themselves, who will help you navigate VA, answer your questions about VA services and benefits available to you, and connect you with the Women Veterans Program Manager at your local VA medical center. This service is free, and you can call as many times as you need.

Call or text us at 855-VA-WOMEN (855-829-6636). WVCC representatives are available Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. ET, and Saturday, 8:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. ET. You can also chat with us online and learn more by visiting <https://www.womenshealth.va.gov>



### Am I Eligible for VA Health Care?

Everyone's situation is unique and so is their eligibility. To find out if you are eligible to enroll, visit <https://www.va.gov/health-care/eligibility>

### Apply Online or By Mail

Go to <https://www.va.gov/health-care/how-to-apply>

### Apply in Person

Visit the nearest VA medical center or clinic. You can locate your nearest VA health facility at <https://www.va.gov/find-locations>

### Apply by Phone

To apply for VA benefits you may have earned—such as preventative care, inpatient and urgent care services—call 1-877-222-8387

Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–8 p.m. ET.  
Veterans Benefits Administration 1-800-827-1000  
[www.vba.va.gov](http://www.vba.va.gov)

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## WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE

# MENOPAUSE



VA



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# MENOPAUSE



## MENOPAUSE: STAGES, SYMPTOMS, AND TREATMENT OPTIONS

Menopause is a normal part of aging when people stop having menstrual periods and there is a natural decline in reproductive hormones. While some people go through menopause without needing treatment, many find symptoms of menopause uncomfortable and would benefit from treatment to relieve them. Your VA health care provider can help with ways to manage your symptoms.

### WHAT IS MENOPAUSE?

There are three stages of menopause: perimenopause, menopause, and post-menopause.

Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause when ovarian function starts to decline. Some people may start having hot flashes, night sweats, or changes in menstrual periods during this time. Your periods may be longer or shorter, heavier or lighter. During perimenopause, you may need to use birth control if you are at risk for pregnancy.

Menopause is when you have not had a menstrual period for 12 months in a row. The average age of the last menstrual period is 52.

During post-menopause, some symptoms may gradually decline, but because of decreased estrogen production, risks for certain conditions including vaginal dryness, urinary incontinence, heart disease, and osteoporosis increase. If you stop having your menstrual period before age 40, contact your VA primary care provider to find out if you're going through menopause or if there is another cause for your missed menstrual periods.

## WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR SYMPTOMS OF MENOPAUSE AND PERIMENOPAUSE?

The most effective treatment for moderate to severe menopausal and perimenopausal symptoms is hormone therapy. Hormone therapy is safe for most people.

Some facts about hormone therapy:

- Low-dose estrogen therapy, usually as a pill or a patch, is most effective for relief from hot flashes and night sweats.
- Progesterone therapy is needed along with estrogen if you still have your uterus. This protects you from uterine cancer, which can happen if you take estrogen without progesterone.
- Estrogen therapy alone may lower breast cancer risk, while estrogen-progesterone therapy may increase the risk. It is important to talk with your VA provider about the best treatment for you.
- Local treatment applied directly to the vagina in the form of cream, pills, or vaginal ring can help with vaginal dryness or pain during sexual activity.

## WHAT ABOUT BIOIDENTICAL HORMONES?

Natural bioidentical hormones are hormones that are plant-based and are chemically identical to the hormones our bodies produce. Some of these products are Food and Drug Administration- (FDA)-approved and produced commercially, and some are not FDA-approved and must be mixed by a compounding pharmacy. Because compounded mixtures are not regulated by the FDA, the purity and the potency can vary. Due to the inconsistent strength and effectiveness of compounded bioidentical hormones, VA does not prescribe or provide them. However, VA providers can and do prescribe FDA-approved hormone therapy.

## HOW CAN YOU MANAGE SYMPTOMS?

While hormone therapy is the most effective treatment, lifestyle changes may also help manage your menopausal/perimenopausal symptoms:

- Dress in layers
- Drink cold beverages
- Eat a healthy diet
- Exercise regularly
- Use a fan when sleeping
- Get enough sleep
- Try meditation or yoga



*Low-dose estrogen therapy patch*

## STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?

Every Veteran is different, with unique needs. Make an appointment with your VA health care provider to find the best therapies for your unique symptoms and concerns.