The Stages of Menopause

Jenny Halbgewachs, CCC, MAC & Menopause Doula

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Understanding menopause stages and ages can help you make sense of the changes you're noticing, identify where you might be in the transition, and speak up for your needs. Tracking changes helps you care for yourself and gives you and your health care providers a way to spot patterns—the questions at the end can get you started. The transition is complex, and research to help women has only recently emerged.

Early Perimenopause: Your regular cycle becomes less predictable. A 28-day cycle may shorten to 24 days; cycles and periods can also become longer. Hormone tests would likely still be within range, though FSH (follicle-stimulating hormone) is slowly rising, estrogen is fluctuating, and progesterone and testosterone are starting to decline. Average age: early 40s.

Late Perimenopause: Officially, this stage begins after 60 days without a period. You may regularly skip cycles, then have a period when you least expect it. Periods may also last longer. Average age: late 40s.

Menopause: You reach this milestone when you have gone 12 months without a period. It marks a point in time rather than an ongoing stage. Average age: 51 to 52.

Post-menopause: This stage begins 1 year after your last period. Sneaky though: if you have a period here, the clock resets and you return to perimenopause, working towards menopause. Within a few years after menopause, many women experience a decrease in symptoms.

Two other possible stages are **premature menopause** and **induced menopause**. Premature menopause means experiencing menopause before age 40. Induced menopause can occur at any time because of surgery, such as a hysterectomy, or medical treatment. If the ovaries are removed, ovulation stops and menopause follows.

Some questions to guide you on identifying symptoms and patterns:

Have your periods changed in timing, length, flow, or level of discomfort?

What changes have you noticed in your sleep, mood, energy, concentration, or memory?

Have you experienced hot flashes or night sweats?

Have you noticed changes in your libido, vaginal or urinary comfort, or joint and muscle aches? When did these changes begin, and how are they affecting your daily life?

Educational content only. This does not constitute clinical guidance or diagnosis

1.Jones, Carrie, Dr. What Stage of Perimenopause Am I In? www.drcarriejones.com
2.Mosconi. Lisa, Dr. (2024). The Menopause Brain: The New Science Empowering Women To Navigate Midlife with Knowledge and Confidence. Allen & Unwin.