



MENOPAUSE

A **factsheet** for Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse+ (IWG2STGD+) People to gain knowledge and awareness of menopause



WHAT IS?



Perimenopause

- Sometimes referred to as the menopausal transition, this is the period leading up to menopause.
- Perimenopause can last for several years, typically starting in a person's 40s, but it can begin earlier or later.¹

Menopause

- Menopause is a natural biological process that marks the end of the reproductive years for an individual with a uterus.
- It is officially defined as the point when a person with a uterus has not had a menstrual period for 12 consecutive months.^{2,3}
- Menopause can also be triggered by other factors, such as surgical interventions like oophorectomy (ovary removal) or hysterectomy (uterus removal), cancer treatments like chemotherapy, or genetic predisposition. In certain cases, the precise cause of menopause is unidentified.⁴
- After menopause, an individual with a uterus cannot become pregnant.⁵





When Does Menopause Occur?

- It occurs about one year after your last period.
- It marks the period when your body is transitioning into natural, permanent infertility.
- It usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55, although this timeline can vary,^{2,3} and for individuals who have had a hysterectomy.⁴

Connecting Trauma and Menopause:

- Sometimes it is hard to separate trauma from menopause. An individual has gone through an adverse childhood experience or a stressful, traumatic event will find the trauma can resurface as they go into menopause.⁶
- Everyone goes through menopause differently.



What are the Western Social and Cultural Contexts?

- Turning 65 is when social attitudes can shift, specifically in social and workplace situations, as there is a connotation of weakness and other negative attitudes with menopause.⁷
- The changes that occur around menopause can be stigmatizing and the aging of women can be taboo.⁸
- It is ok that this stage is mysterious and something you may not know a lot about.

What Are Indigenous Views of Menopause?

- Menopause comes at a time in your life where you flourish, are more beautiful, have knowledge to share, and have a full life.
- It is a time of freedom, self-discovery, self-reflection, and empowerment.^{4,7}



- It often marks “the transition to be a grandmother and prioritizing time for grandchildren, as well as an evolution from learning to teaching cultural ways, and a time when women gained greater respect within their communities.”⁷



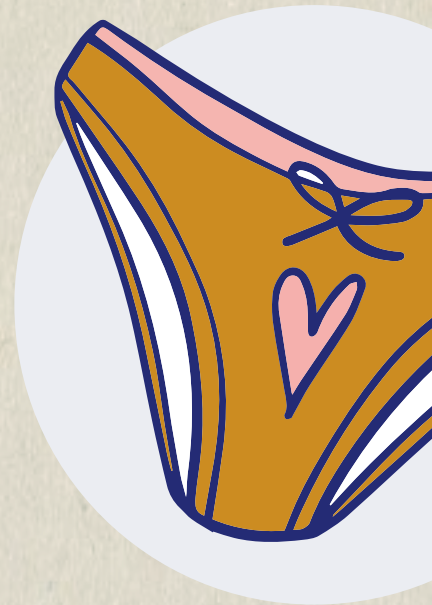
What Are the Common Symptoms of Menopause?

- Permanent or temporary emotional, physical, mental, spiritual, and/or sexual changes such as:
 - irregular menstrual cycles, changes in libido, vaginal dryness
 - night sweats, hot flashes, sleep disturbances^{1,2,3}
 - brain fog/ fatigue/memory and concentration issues
 - depression, low energy, mood changes (irritability, increases in stress and anxiety)⁹
 - changes in hair and skin, weight gain^{1,2,3}



How Can I Manage Menopause Symptoms?

- Estrogen and progesterone hormone replacement therapy can be used. Seek guidance from a healthcare professional first, particularly if you struggle with obesity and/or diabetes.⁴
- Lifestyle changes, such as regular exercise, a healthy diet, and stress management.¹⁰
- Holistic, traditional practices, and alternative therapies such as plant medicines to maintain mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual balance.⁴



How Can I Embrace Menopause, a Natural Phase of Life Full of Opportunities and Support?

- Menopause is a natural part of the aging process, and its impact varies from person to person.²



- Menopause is not a disease. If you are feeling stressed, fearful, or apprehensive, know that it is a significant life event and, while it comes with challenges, it also marks a new phase in one's life^{2,7}
- Find a place to celebrate where you are at. Look after yourself. Self-care should be the first thought, not an afterthought, although it is often very difficult to put yourself first.⁷
- Seeking support from healthcare professionals, Knowledge Holders, Elders, and loved ones can help you navigate this transition successfully.



What Are the Common Symptoms of Menopause?

1. [Perimenopause - Symptoms and causes](#) (Mayo Clinic)
2. [Menopause - Symptoms and causes](#) (Mayo Clinic)
3. [What Is Menopause?](#) (National Institute on Aging)
4. [Menopause and Indigenous Women in Canada: The State of Current Research](#) (National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health)
5. [Menopause](#) (World Health Organization)
6. [The Connection Between PTSD and the Menopausal Transition](#) (CPTSDfoundation.org)
7. [Menopause: A Sisterhood of Indigenous Women](#) (CBC Docs)
8. [Attitudes towards menopause: time for change](#) (The Lancet)
9. [Menopause and mental health](#) (Harvard Health)
10. [Menopause symptoms and relief](#) (Office on Women's Health)

