



# GETTING THROUGH THE (PERI)MENOPAUSE IN A HEALTHY AND CONSCIOUS MANNER



## Hormonal changes

The **menopause** marks the end of a woman's fertility. It is definitive, and therefore not a "pause" but rather a "final stop." Most women reach the menopause between 45 and 55 years of age (no periods for at least 12 months). However, some experience it even earlier. An illness or a medical treatment can also trigger the menopause.

The **perimenopause** is the transition period – also called "pre-menopause" – experienced by women before reaching the menopause. It is a natural phase in a woman's life, which lasts for several years (5 to 10).

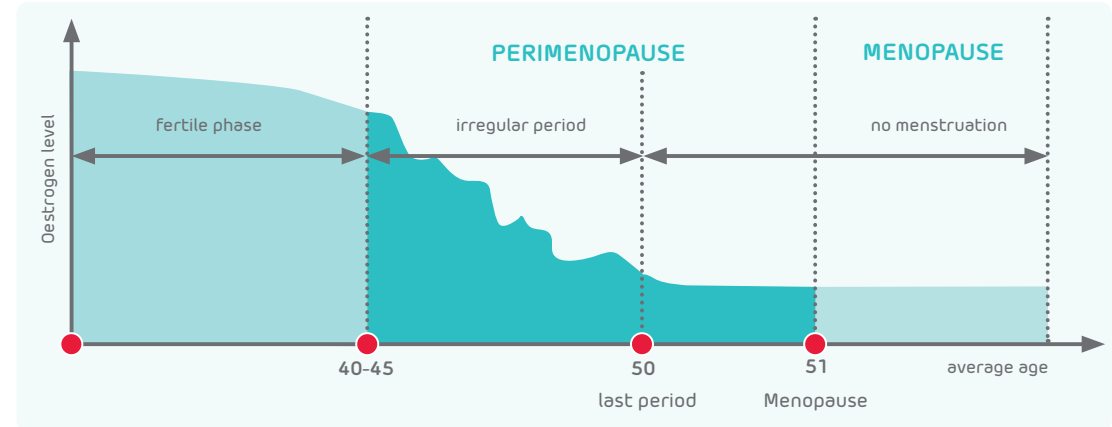
This phase causes **intense hormonal changes** in a woman's body. The main hormone involved in these changes is estrogen, although progesterone and other hormones also play a role. The hormone levels fall erratically, entailing continuous fluctuations.

Do you have the feeling that you haven't been yourself recently? Or do you suffer from all sorts of vague complaints? Are you over 40 years old? It's highly probable that what you are experiencing is linked to the (peri) menopause.

You are not alone! Find out about the (peri)menopause and about possible ways to relieve your symptoms.



A Securex study shows that about 86% of women suffer from (peri) menopausal problems and that 53% of them likewise experience discomfort at work.



Just as the female body needs to adapt to more hormones during puberty, the body of a perimenopausal woman must get used to **less hormones**. Which can bring about a number of **discomforts**. Indeed, estrogen and progesterone not only regulate a woman's reproductive organs, but they also act on many other organs and systems in the body, such as the brain, the muscles, the joints, etc.

Once they have reached the menopause, most women are afforded some respite, but even at this stage, they can still experience discomfort.










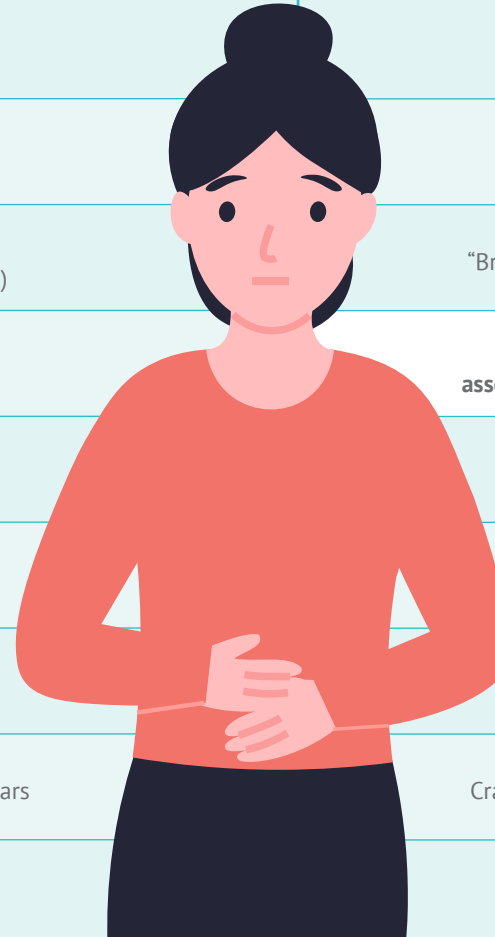
## Not without discomfort

Women may experience **a lot of aches and pains**, both **physical and mental**, for several years. Women do not always make a relation between what they are feeling and the hormonal changes happening in their body. As a result, ... They become concerned about their relationships. They ask themselves whether they are still happy in their job. Or if they have reached burn-out. But what they are experiencing may simply be the (peri)menopause, which is a perfectly natural occurrence.

So, it is important to be well informed.

Here are some of the frequent symptoms or **effects on health** that may result from the change in hormone levels. The origin may also be different, but if you are experiencing various of these complaints and you are over 40 years of age, it is highly probable that they are linked to the (peri)menopause. Even if you are still having your periods.

 Irregular menstruation	Irritability 
 Weight gain: due to a slower metabolism, a higher fat percentage, less muscle production	Feeling depressed 
 Hot flushes	Loss of libido 
 Night sweats	Bladder problems 
 Dry skin and mucosa (eyes, nose, vagina etc.)	"Brain fog": difficulty concentrating 
 Muscle and joint pain	<b>It may also have effects you don't directly associate with the (peri)menopause, including:</b>
 Sleeping problems	
 Osteoporosis	Change in your voice (deeper) 
 Feeling agitated or anxious	Stronger body odour 
 Mood swings, fits of tears	Change in your perception of odours 
 Fatigue	Craving for a different kind of food 
	Appearance or reappearance of allergies 



After reading this, you may be feeling a bit down. However, there's no need for this. Not all women suffer from all of these symptoms, neither are these symptoms just as intense in all of them. The level of discomfort you feel is in part due to chance, but also depends on your way of life. **So, there is something you can do to reduce your discomfort.**

Nevertheless, the probability that women will experience some form of discomfort during this period in life is rather high. Women who suddenly stop having their periods without suffering any other ailments are a tiny minority.



## What can help? Solutions for the (peri)menopause

Although the (peri)menopause is a source of discomfort, it is possible to control many of the symptoms and make yourself feel more comfortable.

- ✔ **It is quite easy to remedy certain problems:** artificial tears for dry eyes, lubricant for sexual intercourse, moisturising lotion for dry or itchy skin.
- ✔ **Do you suffer a lot from hot flushes?** Opt for clothing (for the night) made from natural materials such as cotton or linen and wear layers of clothing.
- ✔ **Adopt a diet adapted to the menopause:**
  - foods that do not set off hot flushes: if you suffer from these, consume spicy dishes, coffee, and alcohol sparingly;
  - foods that reduce the risk of weight gain and high blood pressure: watch out for quick sugars, opt for healthy fats, choose freshly cooked rather than ready meals, and eat smaller portions;
  - opt more often for foods (or supplements) containing **phytoestrogens** (plant estrogens) which can slightly offset the lack of estrogens produced by the body: red clover, chick peas, oat flakes, linseed, soya beans, etc.;
  - make sure you take enough calcium and vitamin D to fight osteoporosis.
- ✔ **Do some exercise!** An **active way of life** is important for everyone, particularly at this stage of life. This helps maintain bone and muscle mass and limits weight gain. Intensive exercise also contributes to better stress regulation, improved sleep quality and positive emotions. It is recommended to do intensive exercise for at least 150 minutes a week.
- ✔ **The (peri)menopause makes you particularly sensitive to stress.** So, grant yourself enough time to relax and look after yourself, and examine ways to avoid energy-consuming activities. The (peri)menopause is THE time of life when you should more often say no to others and yes to yourself.
- ✔ **Hormonal therapy:** in certain cases, a **hormone replacement therapy** (HRT) can be considered to reduce hot flushes and other symptoms. Talk to your GP (or gynaecologist) about the risks and benefits of this.



**TIP: A simple breathing exercise can do wonders for feeling more at peace and also helps improve your quality of sleep.**

- Inhale slowly through your nose → count up to 4
  - then exhale very slowly through your nose or your mouth → count up to 6
- For the best results, do this for 10 minutes (or more).



## (Peri)menopause and work

If you are experiencing discomfort, this can also hinder you at work. It is quite annoying, but that's how it is. You are doing your absolute best to get on with your life despite these problems, perhaps hoping no one will notice.

A Securex study shows that **maintaining a good work-life balance** is the single key factor in reducing (peri)menopausal discomfort at work.

Moreover, the study also shows that women who dare to **talk openly** about their symptoms with their colleagues or superiors suffer less. Laughing about it together, seeking understanding, exchanging advice: social support works and removes a good deal of extra stress. Your manager can also look for workable **solutions** with you to better reconcile work and the (peri)menopause: temporary adaptation of your work timetable, of your tasks, your work station, etc.





### A new phase in your life: now, it is up to you!

At this stage of life, many women say they pay more attention to taking care of themselves and setting limits than at a younger age. They have a better insight in what they want, what matters to them and what gives them energy. So, the (peri) menopause marks the beginning of a phase of life marked by a greater awareness of self.

**That's an asset: make use of it, including at work.**

### You are not alone: seek professional advice

All women experience the (peri)menopause differently. Fix an appointment with your GP, your gynaecologist, or a menopause consultant to **discuss how the (peri) menopause is affecting you** and the options at your disposal to deal with it. Together, you can set out the programme that suits you best.

Psychological support can help you manage the emotional aspects of the (peri) menopause.

Responsible Editor: Group Securex, Patrick Ghyllbert, avenue de Tervueren 43, 1040 Bruxelles - BE0113 menopause - 03/04/24

Ask your External Service for Prevention and Protection for advice.

@ health-safety@securex.be  www.securex.be

