BIRMINGHAM MENOPAUSE CLINIC

Menopause

What is menopause?

Menopause is a natural biological process that marks the end of a woman's reproductive years. It occurs when the ovaries stop releasing eggs and the production of oestrogen and progesterone decreases significantly. The medical diagnosis of menopause is confirmed after 12 consecutive months without a menstrual period. Most women reach menopause between the ages of 45 and 55, with the average age in the UK being 51 years. While menopause is a normal part of ageing, the symptoms and changes associated with it can vary widely from woman to woman.

Menopause is divided into three stages: **perimenopause, menopause, and postmenopause.** Perimenopause refers to the transitional phase leading up to menopause, when hormone levels begin to fluctuate, causing irregular periods and symptoms similar to those experienced during menopause. Postmenopause follows menopause and continues for the rest of a woman's life, marked by lower levels of oestrogen and the end of menstruation.

Early and premature menopause

For some women, menopause can occur earlier than expected, either naturally or due to medical conditions or treatments. There are two primary types of early menopause:

- **Early menopause:** This refers to menopause that occurs

before the age of 45. Women in early menopause may experience symptoms similar to those of menopause, such as hot flushes, night sweats, and mood swings.

- **Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI):** Also known as premature menopause, this occurs before the age of 40. POI can be caused by genetics, autoimmune disorders, or medical treatments such as chemotherapy. Women with POI may be at higher risk for certain health conditions, such as osteoporosis and heart disease, due to the extended period of oestrogen deficiency.

Causes of menopause

Menopause can occur naturally as part of the ageing process, or it may be triggered by medical procedures or treatments. The most common causes of menopause include:

- **Natural menopause:** This is the most common form of menopause, typically occurring between the ages of 45 and 55. It results from the gradual decline in the function of the ovaries, which leads to a decrease in hormone production.
- **Surgical menopause:** Menopause can be induced by the removal of the ovaries, a procedure known as an oophorectomy. This is often performed as part of a total abdominal hysterectomy with bilateral salpingo-oophorectomy (TAH and BSO), which involves the removal of the uterus, cervix, fallopian tubes, and ovaries. This causes an immediate onset of menopause.
- **Radiotherapy or chemotherapy:** Cancer treatments,

especially those targeting the pelvic area, can damage the ovaries and lead to early or premature menopause.

- **Hysterectomy:** While removing the uterus (hysterectomy) does not directly cause menopause, it can lead to early menopause if the ovaries are damaged or removed during surgery. Even if the ovaries are left intact, some women may experience menopause earlier than expected after a hysterectomy.

Recognising menopause symptoms

The symptoms of menopause can vary significantly from woman to woman. Some women experience only mild discomfort, while others may find that menopause has a significant impact on their daily life. Symptoms can affect physical, psychological, cognitive, and reproductive health.

Physical symptoms:

- **Hot flushes:** Sudden, intense heat that spreads through the body, often accompanied by sweating.
- **Night sweats:** Excessive sweating at night, which can disrupt sleep.
- **Fatigue:** Persistent tiredness and low energy levels.
- **Joint and muscle aches:** Pain, stiffness, and discomfort in the joints and muscles.
- **Headaches and migraines:** Hormonal fluctuations can trigger more frequent or intense headaches.
- **Hair changes:** Hair may become dry and thin, with some women experiencing hair loss.
- **Facial hair:** An increase in facial hair growth is common

during menopause.

- **Skin changes:** Dry, itchy, or irritable skin, and in some cases, oily skin and acne.
- **Urinary symptoms:** Increased risk of urinary incontinence or urinary tract infections (UTIs).
- **Palpitations:** A noticeable, often irregular heartbeat.
- **Tinnitus:** Ringing or buzzing in the ears.
- **Weight gain:** Many women gain weight, particularly around the abdomen, during menopause.

Psychological symptoms:

- **Anxiety:** Increased feelings of worry or unease.
- **Low mood and depression:** Persistent sadness and a loss of interest in activities.
- **Irritability:** Heightened sensitivity and frustration.
- **Loss of confidence:** A decrease in self-esteem and confidence.
- **Not feeling 'yourself':** Many women describe a sense of unfamiliarity with themselves, feeling disconnected from their emotions.

Cognitive symptoms:

- **Difficulty concentrating:** Trouble focusing on tasks or following through with thoughts.
- **Memory loss:** Forgetfulness and difficulty recalling information.
- **Brain fog:** A term used to describe the mental sluggishness or clouded thinking that can occur during menopause.

- **Fatigue:** Overwhelming tiredness that affects both mental and physical activities.

Reproductive health symptoms:

- **Loss of sex drive (libido):** A reduced interest in sexual activity is common.
- **Worsening premenstrual symptoms:** Some women experience more intense PMS symptoms.
- **Vaginal dryness/irritation:** Lower oestrogen levels can lead to vaginal discomfort and pain during sexual intercourse.

Managing menopause symptoms

At **Birmingham Menopause Clinic,** we provide comprehensive care to help women manage the symptoms of menopause effectively. Our clinic offers a range of services designed to improve your quality of life, including:

- **Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT):** HRT is one of the most effective treatments for relieving menopause symptoms by replenishing hormone levels. Our specialists will create a personalised HRT plan tailored to your needs.
- **Lifestyle adjustments:** We offer expert advice on diet, exercise, and lifestyle changes that can help reduce the severity of menopause symptoms and promote overall well-being.
- **Non-hormonal treatment options:** For women who cannot or prefer not to take HRT, we provide alternative treatment options to alleviate menopause symptoms

without the use of hormones.

- **Complementary therapies:** Include herbal supplements, yoga, hypnotherapy, CBT and mindfulness which may help relieve menopause symptoms.

Why choose Birmingham Menopause Clinic?

At **Birmingham Menopause Clinic**, we pride ourselves on offering expert, personalised care to help women navigate menopause with confidence and support. Our clinic offers:

- **Expert care:** Our highly experienced specialists are dedicated to menopause management.
- **Personalised treatment plans:** Each patient receives a treatment plan tailored to her specific symptoms and medical history.
- **Convenient appointments:** We offer flexible scheduling options, including face-to-face, video, and telephone consultations, to fit your lifestyle.

Contact us

Take control of your menopause journey today. Contact **Birmingham Menopause Clinic** to schedule a consultation and explore our comprehensive range of services designed to support your health and well-being. Let us help you manage your menopause symptoms and improve your quality of life with expert care and support.