

# Perimenopause

## What is perimenopause?

Perimenopause is the transitional phase leading up to menopause, during which a woman's hormone levels, particularly oestrogen, begin to fluctuate as the ovaries gradually reduce their production. These hormonal changes can lead to irregular periods and trigger a wide range of symptoms, many of which are similar to those experienced during menopause. However, the key difference is that during perimenopause, women still experience menstrual periods, though they may be closer together, further apart, heavier, or lighter than before.

Perimenopause typically lasts an average of four years, though for some women, it can extend up to ten years. This phase is a significant part of the menopausal transition and can begin as early as a woman's mid-30s, though it is more common in the late 40s. The symptoms can often be subtle, making them harder to recognise as being directly related to perimenopause. It is important to be aware of the potential signs and symptoms so that they can be managed effectively, ensuring a smoother transition into menopause.

## Symptoms of perimenopause and menopause

Both perimenopause and menopause share similar symptoms due to fluctuating hormone levels, with the key distinction being that menstrual periods continue during perimenopause. These symptoms can vary in intensity and may fluctuate over time.

Below are some of the most common symptoms associated with both phases:

### Physical symptoms

- **Hot flushes:** Sudden, intense feelings of heat, often followed by sweating. Hot flushes are one of the most recognisable symptoms of perimenopause and menopause.
- **Night sweats:** Excessive sweating during sleep, which can disrupt rest and lead to fatigue.
- **Fatigue:** Persistent tiredness or low energy levels, even after adequate rest.
- **Joint and muscle aches:** Many women experience pain, stiffness, and discomfort in their joints and muscles.
- **Headaches and migraines:** Fluctuations in hormone levels can increase the frequency and intensity of headaches and migraines.
- **Hair changes:** Dry, thinning hair or even hair loss may occur, while some women may notice increased facial hair growth.
- **Skin changes:** Dry, itchy, or irritable skin, or for some, oily skin and the onset of acne.
- **Urinary symptoms:** Urinary incontinence, frequent urination, and a higher risk of urinary tract infections (UTIs) can be caused by hormonal shifts.
- **Palpitations:** Women may experience an increased awareness of their heartbeat, which can be unsettling.
- **Tinnitus:** Ringing or buzzing in the ears, another symptom linked to hormonal changes.
- **Weight gain:** Many women notice weight gain, particularly around the abdomen, during perimenopause and menopause due

to metabolic changes.

### Psychological symptoms

- **Anxiety:** Heightened feelings of worry, unease, or panic can become more frequent during this time.
- **Low mood and depression:** Persistent sadness, a lack of interest in daily activities, and feelings of hopelessness may arise.
- **Irritability:** Hormonal changes can lead to increased irritability and emotional sensitivity.
- **Loss of confidence:** A noticeable decline in self-esteem and confidence is common during this phase.
- **Not feeling 'yourself':** Many women describe a general sense of unease or unfamiliarity with their mental and emotional state.

### Cognitive symptoms

- **Difficulty concentrating:** Trouble focusing on tasks or maintaining attention can occur, which may affect daily productivity.
- **Memory loss:** Forgetfulness and difficulty recalling information are common cognitive symptoms.
- **Brain fog:** This term is often used to describe the feelings of mental sluggishness or clouded thinking associated with menopause.
- **Fatigue:** Overwhelming tiredness that affects both mental and physical activities can make simple tasks feel exhausting.

### Reproductive health symptoms

- **Loss of sex drive (libido):** A reduced interest in sexual activity can impact personal relationships and self-image.

- **Worsening premenstrual symptoms:** Some women experience more intense premenstrual syndrome (PMS) symptoms during perimenopause.
- **Vaginal dryness and irritation:** The decline in oestrogen can lead to vaginal discomfort, dryness, and pain during sexual intercourse.

### Managing perimenopause and menopause symptoms

Recognising the symptoms of perimenopause and menopause is the first step toward managing them effectively. At Birmingham Menopause Clinic, we offer a comprehensive range of services designed to help women manage these symptoms and improve their overall well-being. Our team of specialists provides personalised care and support, tailoring treatment options to suit each woman's unique needs. Some of the key management options we offer include:

- **Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT):** HRT is one of the most effective treatments for managing menopause symptoms. By replenishing declining hormone levels, HRT can significantly improve the quality of life for women experiencing hot flashes, night sweats, mood swings, and more. At Birmingham Menopause Clinic, our specialists will carefully assess your suitability for HRT and develop a treatment plan tailored to your needs.
- **Lifestyle adjustments:** Making changes to your diet, exercise routine, and overall lifestyle can have a profound effect on managing menopause symptoms. Our team provides guidance on how to improve your daily habits to support hormone balance, weight management, and emotional well-being.
- **Non-hormonal treatment options:** For women who are

unable or prefer not to take HRT, we offer a variety of non-hormonal treatments to alleviate symptoms. These include medications, herbal remedies, and alternative therapies, all designed to provide relief without the use of hormones.

### **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**

If you are experiencing symptoms of perimenopause or menopause, don't wait to seek support. At Birmingham Menopause Clinic, we are committed to helping women manage their symptoms and regain control of their health. Our specialist team is here to offer expert advice and personalised treatment plans that can improve your quality of life during this significant phase. Take the first step toward a more comfortable and confident menopause journey.