

# Perimenopause Guide



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## Welcome to the Transition

Hey there! If you're reading this, chances are you've started noticing some changes, or maybe you're just curious about what's coming. Either way, you're in the right place. Perimenopause is the phase before menopause that every woman goes through—if she lives long enough. It's a time of transition, and yes, it can be a bit of a rollercoaster. But don't worry, you're not alone. With the right information, you can navigate this journey with confidence and even a bit of grace.

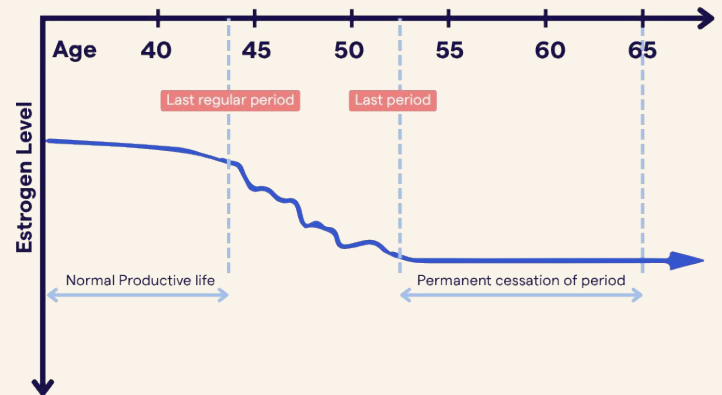
## What's Perimenopause All About?

Perimenopause is like the warm-up before menopause—the time when your body starts adjusting to the idea of no more periods. This phase can start as early as your mid-30s or as late as your mid-50s. For some of us, it's a quick transition; for others, it takes its sweet time.

**What's really going on?** Your hormones, especially estrogen, are starting to fluctuate. These changes can lead to all sorts of symptoms, like irregular periods, hot flashes, night sweats, and trouble sleeping. It's all part of the process, and though it can be frustrating, it's also completely normal.

# Why Is This Happening?

Let's break it down: Your ovaries have been producing estrogen for years, but as you approach menopause, they start to wind down production. This drop in estrogen can throw your body's balance off, leading to a variety of symptoms. It's a natural process, but that doesn't make it any less disruptive.



## What to Expect: Common Symptoms

Every woman's experience of perimenopause is unique. Some of us sail through with barely a blip, while others feel like they're constantly dealing with something new. Here's what you might encounter:



### Hot Flashes and Night Sweats:

These sudden waves of heat can strike at any time, leaving you flushed and sweaty. Night sweats can mess with your sleep, making you feel irritable and exhausted.



### Mood Swings and Irritability:

Hormones can affect your mood, leading to feelings of anxiety, irritability, or even depression.



### Irregular Periods:

Your menstrual cycle might start to play tricks on you—getting shorter, longer, heavier, or lighter. It's like your body is keeping you on your toes.



### Brain Fog:

Many women report feeling mentally cloudy or forgetful during perimenopause.



### Vaginal Dryness:

Lower estrogen levels can cause thinning and drying of vaginal tissues, making sex uncomfortable.



### Sleep Issues:

Thanks to those lovely hormonal shifts, insomnia or waking up in the middle of the night becomes more common.



### Urinary Changes:

You might notice you need to pee more often or experience some discomfort during urination.

# Is It Stress or Perimenopause?

We're all juggling a lot—aging parents, growing kids, busy careers—so it's easy to chalk up your symptoms to stress. But if you're dealing with things like irregular periods, hot flashes, or night sweats, perimenopause could be playing a role, too.

## How Do I Know It's Perimenopause?

Here's the deal: there's no single test that says, "Congrats, you're in perimenopause!" Hormone levels can be all over the place, so even a blood test isn't definitive. Instead, doctors usually rely on your symptoms and menstrual history. Want a good predictor? Take a look at when your mom hit menopause—that's sometimes a good clue.

## What's Going on with My Periods?

As your body transitions, your periods might start acting up—becoming longer, shorter, heavier, or lighter. In most cases, periods get closer together. You might also find that your PMS symptoms are suddenly more intense.

## Can I Still Get Pregnant?

Absolutely. If you're still getting periods, even irregular ones, you're still ovulating. Until you've gone a full 12 months without a period, you should assume you can still get pregnant.

## How to Manage the Madness

Perimenopause is a natural phase of life, but that doesn't mean you have to just grin and bear it. There are plenty of ways to manage the symptoms and maintain your quality of life:

- **Lifestyle Tweaks:**

Regular exercise, eating healthy, and incorporating stress management techniques like yoga or meditation can make a big difference.

- **Hormone Therapy:**

For some women, balancing things out with hormone therapy can be a game-changer. It's definitely a conversation worth having with your doctor.

- **Over-the-Counter Helpers:**

Vaginal dryness? There are plenty of lubricants that can help. Hot flashes? -Optimizing your nutrition through healthy diet and supplementing deficits might provide relief, just be sure to check with your doctor first.

**Progesterone:** Taking a progesterone pill orally at night might help with sleep and keeping calm when prescribed in conjunction with a personalized mHT regime.

# Can Perimenopause Be Treated?

You can't stop perimenopause, but you can definitely manage it. Your doctor might suggest lifestyle changes, but if that's not enough, there are medications that can help:



## Birth Control Pills

Contain estrogen and progestogen and, therefore, they can help stabilize your hormones and relieve perimenopausal symptoms.



## Menopausal Hormone Therapy mHT

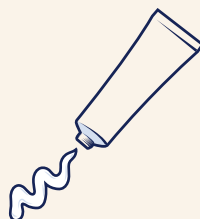
*(previously known as Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT))*

For those who've started into perimenopause, there may be a role for mHT but be sure to speak to your provider.



## Fezolinetant (VEOZAH™):

A non-hormonal option for severe hot flashes.



## Vaginal Creams:

Your doctor can prescribe creams or lubricants (or even oral medications) to help make sex more comfortable and relieve dryness.



## Antidepressants

These can help with hot flashes, mood swings, anxiety, or depression. Although they are called antidepressants, some have been approved to alleviate vasomotor symptoms. One option is Paroxetine (Brisdelle), a non-hormone, anti-depressant medication known to help hot flashes.



# What Can Make Symptoms Worse?

Perimenopause can be tricky, and certain habits or lifestyle choices might make things tougher:

- **Unhealthy Eating:**

Sugary drinks, desserts, and foods high in saturated fat can make symptoms worse. Eating healthier can help with weight changes and hot flashes.

- **Skipping Exercise:**

Staying active can improve your energy, mood, and sleep.

- **Smoking:**

Using tobacco products can lead to early menopause, lower bone density, and make vaginal dryness worse.

- **Alcohol:**

Can make hot flashes and insomnia much worse.

## Empower Yourself

Perimenopause is just another chapter in your story, and like any chapter, it's easier to navigate when you know what's coming. By understanding what's happening in your body, you can make informed decisions and take control of your health. This phase doesn't have to be something you just survive—you can thrive with the right tools and support.



# Got More Questions?

## Is Perimenopause Messing with My Sex Life?

It can. Vaginal dryness and thinning tissue may make sex less comfortable, and shifts in hormones can lower arousal or make orgasm harder to reach. Relationship dynamics and body changes over time can play a role too.

**What helps:** lubricants, vaginal moisturizers, and—if needed—local or systemic hormone therapy. Open communication with your partner and a check-in with your doctor can make a big difference.

## What's with These Hot Flashes?

A hot flash often feels like a sudden wave of heat rising through your chest, face, and neck, usually with sweating and redness. They can be unpredictable and disruptive, day or night.

**What helps:** layering clothes, staying hydrated, avoiding common triggers (like spicy foods, caffeine, or alcohol), and practicing paced breathing. Some women find relief with hormone therapy or certain non-hormonal medications.

## Why Can't I Sleep?

Hot flashes and night sweats are classic sleep disruptors during perimenopause. Hormonal changes can also affect your body's natural sleep-wake rhythm.

**What helps:** cooling your sleep space, avoiding alcohol/caffeine before bed, keeping a steady bedtime routine, and trying relaxation techniques. If sleep issues persist, talk to your doctor about treatment options.

## Why Am I Gaining Weight?

Shifting hormones can slow metabolism and change where your body stores fat—often around the belly. Add in natural aging, stress, and less sleep, and weight gain is common.

**What helps:** regular movement (strength training + cardio), balanced eating with lean proteins and fiber, stress management, and prioritizing sleep. Small, consistent changes matter more than quick fixes.

# Chat with Your Doctor

Talking to your healthcare provider about perimenopause can help you get clarity and relief.

Use this checklist to guide your conversation:

## Symptoms

- Are my changes (irregular periods, hot flashes, mood or sleep shifts) normal?
- Could they be caused by something else?

## Periods

- What bleeding changes are expected vs. concerning?

## Relief Options

- What helps with hot flashes or mood changes?
- Am I a candidate for hormonal or non-hormonal treatments?

## Birth Control & Health

- Do I still need contraception?
- Should I take supplements like calcium or vitamin D?
- Am I up to date on key screenings?

## Long-Term Care

- How can I protect my heart and bone health?



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