

Menopause

The menopause, also known as the 'change of life' is marked by the ending of menstruation.

The menopause occurs at an average age of about 50, but the usual range is from 47 to 52. Occurrences outside this range are quite common. Sometimes the menopause is delayed to 55 or later; sometimes it may occur at 40 or earlier. A premature menopause can have one of many causes, and also occurs if for any reason the ovaries have to be removed surgically (perhaps as part of a total hysterectomy).

The main effect of the menopause is a greatly reduced production of the hormone oestrogen.

Some menopausal women suffer psychologically from the awareness that they have come to the end of reproductive life. Some view the menopause as a significant stage in ageing.

The most common symptom is hot flushes affecting the face and neck. These vary greatly in frequency and duration. Flushes do not indicate a rise in blood pressure, but merely a rise in the flow of blood through the affected parts.

Other reported menopausal symptoms include night sweats, insomnia, headaches, weight gain and general irritability. Often these symptoms are severe enough in themselves to justify hormonal treatment.

Some of the more unpleasant physical effects of the symptoms of menopause can be helped by hormone replacement therapy. Your GP, Practice Nurse or Well Women Clinic should be happy to discuss these options.