

# THE EXPERIENCE OF MENOPAUSE

This journey describes a range of physical, emotional, mental, and social experiences a person may experience as they go through menopause. Every journey is complex and unique.

	EARLY SIGNS	CONFIRMATION	SEARCHING	ACCEPTANCE	RENEWAL					
	Starts to experience physical, mental, and emotional changes related to perimenopause, often signalled by changes in the menstrual cycle	Receives validation, often from other women, that they are going through the early stages of menopause	Searches for answers and solutions for managing symptoms and experiments with remedies to feel normal again	Accepts changes as a new, normal way of life and adapts lifestyle accordingly	Enters a new phase of life with a renewed sense of self and life priorities					
FEELING	Nervous, Concerned, Ignored, Frustrated, Confused	Relieved, Calm, Hopeful, Disappointed, Vulnerable	Upset, Sad, Embarrassed, Shame, Withdrawn, Rage, Guilty, Irritable, Frustrated	Hopeful, Stronger, Calm	Vulnerable, Assertive, Empowered, Grounded					
BODY	Initial change in menstrual cycle Missed period, light periods, irregular periods, heavy bleeding, flooding	Pre-menstrual symptoms worsen Hot flashes and sweats, day and night Difficulty sleeping Insomnia, fatigue	Confirmation Self-diagnosis or diagnosed by healthcare provider Mood changes Depression, anxiety Body and joint pain, stiffness	Bloating Poor memory Difficulty concentrating Low libido	Vaginal dryness Anemia Weight gain	Confounding health problems Fibroids, diabetes, etc. Erratic menstrual cycle	Signs of ageing Grey hair, changes in skin, etc. Symptoms may subside	Period stops entirely for at least 12 months	Exacerbation of chronic health conditions	New health challenges associated with ageing
THINKING	“My body is unpredictable” “What’s wrong with me?”	“It was a relief to confide in my girlfriends” “I’m not crazy”	“I feel out of control” “I’m not prepared for this”	“Menopause doesn’t happen overnight” “I need to learn to live with this”	“I’m exploring new types of relationships” “I want to make the most of this new chapter”					
DOING	Searches online for help, answers Seeks multiple opinions for advice, guidance (e.g., from healthcare professionals, friends, family, alternative medicine practitioners)	Manages conflicting opinions and dismissive attitudes about health, particularly from doctors (e.g., symptoms minimized, overlooked) Self-advocates for support, help	Confirms perimenopause with a healthcare professional and/or most often with other women (friends, family, colleagues, etc.) May take blood test to confirm perimenopause	Turns to female friends, family, colleagues, and experts for advice, validation, and support Self-advocates for support, help	Self-advocates for support, help Searches online for support, answers Seeks empathic, knowledgeable experts, preferably female Visits doctor for pharmaceuticals, referrals Visits natural medicine practitioners for holistic, natural, and alternative remedies	Experiments with symptom-specific remedies (e.g., therapy, natural supplements, prescription medication) Tries different lifestyle strategies to manage symptoms (e.g., naps to offset lack of sleep, frequent showers to manage sweats, reduces alcohol and caffeine intake, etc.)	Uses strategies and remedies that offer the greatest comfort and alleviation of symptoms Adjusts lifestyle to accommodate for problematic symptoms	Adopts healthy behaviors (e.g., healthy diet, regular exercise)	Forms new types of bonds, supports, and intimate relationships, especially with women Forms a new sense of self-identity, self-worth, and purpose in life	Makes plans and lifestyle changes that reflect a renewed outlook on life