

So what exactly are the Peri Menopause & the Menopause

We hear the phrases a lot however do we actually know what it is? Here we are going to strip it back to basics explaining what it is and the symptoms associated with it.

Menopause simple means 'menses - stop' a female may be referred to as 'menopausal' when she has had no period for over 1 year. This occurs when the ovaries no longer produce eggs and, as a result, the levels of hormones oestrogen, progesterone and testosterone decrease.

This often occurs around the early 50's however it is not uncommon for it to be before or after this, with symptoms often showing as early as the early 40's. This stage prior to the menopause is called the peri menopause.

Sometimes the menopause can be experienced/induced due to situations such as oophorectomy, hysterectomy, some chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatments as well as occasionally be affected by some genetic factors. Menopause before 40's is called P.O.I Primary Ovarian Insufficiency.

So how do we know if it is the menopause that we are experiencing?

It is important to note that the symptoms can vary in severity from one person to the next, but often impact daily activities. There are at least 37 known symptoms

Common symptoms include:

- Hot flushes
- Night sweats
- Mood swings, irritability, low mood and anxiety.
- Cognitive changes (difficulty remembering names, directions, losing focus/train of thought)
- Vaginal dryness and discomfort during sex, low libido.
- Difficulty sleeping with frequent awakenings.
- Palpitations
- Hair and skin changes - dryness and itching.
- Joint pain and stiffness.

Menopausal symptoms can begin years before your periods stop and last around 4 years after your last period, although some women experience them for much longer.

This is a normal phase of life and it is very important that women recognise their symptoms as being hormone-related. A symptoms tracker may help women to identify their concerns.