

The Beginner's Guide to Perimenopause and Beyond



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Hello Beautiful Friend,

Before we jump right into the nitty gritty of all things Perimenopause and Beyond, I want to take a minute to introduce myself . . .



My name is Karen, and I wear a lot of different titles from former middle school educator, wife to a very supportive hubby that encourages me every day to follow my dreams, to mom of three amazing kiddos ranging from ages 25 to 13, I'm also a fur mama to three high energy pups, a certified personal trainer, certified Sports Nutritionist, and a certified Health and Wellness coach. But my current favorite role is just being a strong female hoping to inspire and empower other strong females around me.

As a natural-born teacher. I've always wanted to educate those around me, but it wasn't until a few years ago when I started experiencing my own perimenopausal journey that I decided to really zone in on empowering other midlife women by helping them navigate the new, the unknown, the beautiful season known as midlife!

The more research I did, the more I realized we were lacking so much information as women. From the time we are old enough to understand what it means to be a female, we learn about puberty, pregnancy, and motherhood, but beyond that, the topic is just swept under the rug.

My goal as a health and wellness coach is to open up the dialogue. I want you chatting with your best friend, your female family members, your daughters, your sisters, your partner, and your doctor. It's time we stop putting shame behind the "M word" and start empowering ourselves with knowledge and strategies to navigate the unknown!

Belly fat, brain fog, anxiety, heart palpitations, mood swings, sleeping disturbances, fatigue, and low libido are all common symptoms that come with midlife and a shift in hormones. These hormonal changes affect just about every system in your body.

But listen sis, you don't have to suffer!!

There are some simple lifestyle choices that can significantly and positively affect your menopause journey. There are several ways that small lifestyle changes can help minimize the never ending list of symptoms. **As a women's health coach my goal is to give you the tools to add to your toolbelt that will make this change in your life a little easier.**

This eBook is just a quick introduction to perimenopause. It is not an all-inclusive guide or in any way a substitute for you doing your own research, talking with your own health care team, and making decisions about your midlife health that are right for YOU. However, this is a great place to get started!! And I'm so proud of you arming yourself with knowledge, but it doesn't end here - this is just the beginning of you empowering yourself!

Brené Brown said it best: "Midlife is not a crisis. Midlife is an unraveling" and our goal is to make it the most beautiful and empowered unraveling there was!!

So sit back, grab yourself a refreshing drink, and take a few minutes to learn a little more about this new season of change.

Once you are done, remember you've only just begun.

Congratulations on taking the first step. I'm excited to be partnering with you as we work together to make this season your absolute best season!!

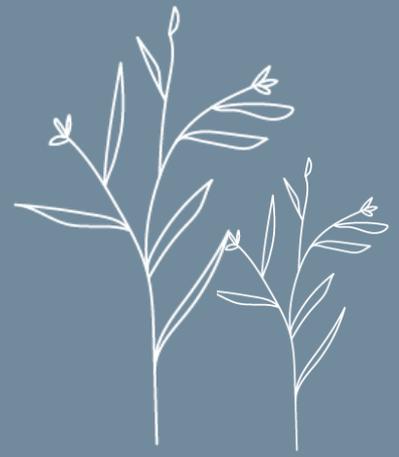


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Overview



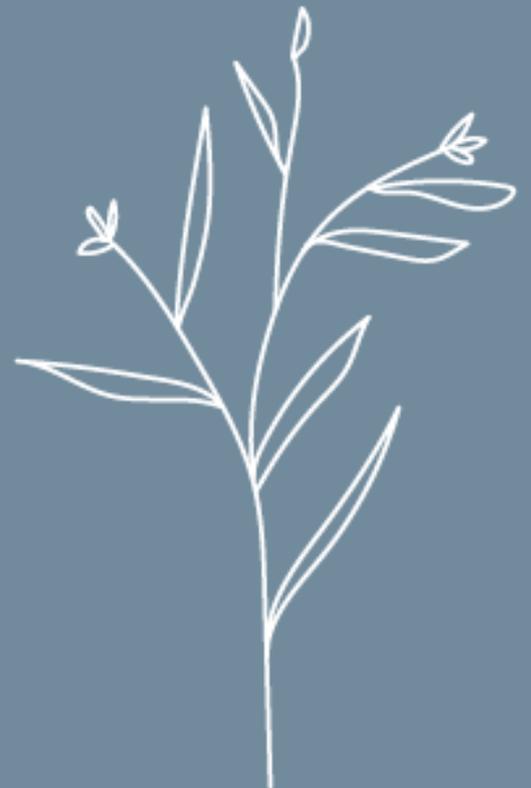
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What is Perimenopause

“I’M JUST TOO YOUNG FOR THIS!”

Oh, those famous last words. These may be the most frequently spoken words you will hear yourself say as you begin your perimenopausal journey starting as early as your mid-thirties and taking you deep into your late forties, fifties and possibly your early sixties!

This time in your life is when it may feel like your environment, dietary habits, and lifestyle seemed to be conspiring against your body, creating a ridiculous amount of annoying and super frustrating symptoms, including: a decreased sex drive, insomnia, exhaustion, poor gut health, belly fat, hot flashes, depression, anxiety, and a slowing metabolism. Good times, sister!

So you’re probably wondering . . . what is perimenopause, really? And how does it relate to menopause?

Perimenopause is the transition from your reproductive years to menopause, or your post reproductive years.

Perimenopause can begin as early as thirty-five and as late as fifty-nine, and it can last anywhere from two to thirteen years. That's a really long time to feel overwhelmed and confused about what's happening with your body!!

The prefix Peri means around.

About ten to fifteen years before you reach menopause, your body starts giving you tiny hints that changes are coming. You may notice differences in your periods, including changes to the length, frequency, duration, or flow. If you had been keeping track, you would likely see that your length of cycle has changed from your early twenties to your mid-thirties. This occurs because maturing follicles produce less progesterone during each cycle, shortening the period of time when the uterine lining thickens in preparation for a fertilized egg.

As perimenopause begins, the number and quality of follicles decrease to the point that there is not enough estrogen produced to prompt ovulation, causing periods to become erratic and finally stopping all together.

The closer you get to the end of your reproductive years, the more changes you may notice to the duration and flow of your cycle.

I'm sure, just like me, nobody told you all this! I always thought menopause was like a switch, and one day your period just turned off. I never knew there was a whole season that came before, where a majority of the change actually occurs!!

Again . . . why is no one talking about this!?!

You may share a lot of the same symptoms with the women around you, but understand that no two women are alike and each will progress through perimenopause differently.

Here's the really cool thing: FUN FACT . . . Menopause is just one day!! That's right! ONE DAY!! And I personally think that day should be celebrated with a party!! Or at least some ice cream and cake.

Menopause is the twelve-month anniversary of your final menstrual period. So you are officially a perimenopause graduate on the 365th day of having no periods!!

It's important to understand that women that have had their ovaries removed surgically, also known as a hysterectomy are considered to be in surgical menopause.

A partial hysterectomy is the removal of the uterus only, leaving one or both ovaries intact; these women will no longer have periods, but they have not technically reached menopause yet.

It's also important to know . . . YES you can still be fertile during perimenopause!! Super important when it comes to making birth control decisions.

Perimenopause often feels like a bad case of PMS. Indeed, many of the symptoms are the same due to similar hormonal shifts that occur.

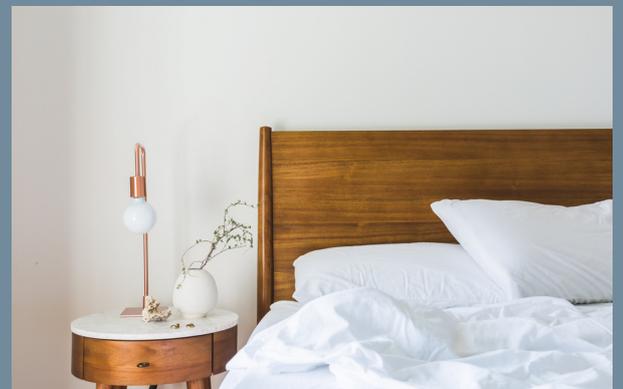
During perimenopause and PMS, estrogen and progesterone levels change, causing bloating, weight gain, food cravings, headache, depression, irritability, lack of energy, and lack of concentration.

So how can you tell the difference? Apply this simple rule: if your periods continue to occur regularly, it's probably PMS. However, if your periods are irregular it might just be perimenopause.

Think of perimenopause as a second puberty. Like puberty, perimenopause is gradual and it causes unpleasant symptoms if your body is out of whack. Many women noticed a pattern of "worsening PMS" symptoms starting as early as late twenties, which is probably the beginning of early ovarian hormonal shifts leading up to perimenopause.

COMMON PERIMENOPAUSE and MENOPAUSE SYMPTOMS

- Acne
- Allergies
- Anxiety
- Bloating
- Blood sugar imbalance
- Brain fog
- Breast tenderness
- Depression
- Facial hair
- Fatigue
- Hair Loss or thinning hair
- Heart palpitations
- Hot flashes
- Hypothyroidism
- Insomnia
- Irritable / Mood Swings
- Itchy skin or dry skin
- Joint pain
- Loss of sexual desire
- Memory problems
- Migraines
- Menstrual cycle irregularity
- Muscle loss
- Panic attacks / anxiety
- Stomach cramps / poor gut health
- Vaginal dryness / painful or uncomfortable intercourse
- Weight gain



Diet, exercise, stress reduction, and quality sleep are just some ways to minimize these symptoms.

Are You in Perimenopause?

Wondering if what YOU are experiencing is perimenopause? Here's a quick little quiz you can use from one of my Perimenopause experts, Dr. Ann Louise Gittleman, PhD, CNS and author of [Before the Change - Taking Charge of Your Perimenopause](#). (I highly recommend getting this book!)

Give yourself a

- 1 if the symptom is mild or occasional
- 2 if the symptom is moderate or frequent
- 3 if the symptom is severe

Do you feel depressed or have the "blues" for no apparent reason? _____

Do you experience restlessness, irritability, and/or anxiety? _____

Have your sleep patterns changed, with frequent awakenings or insomnia?

Does your heart sometimes pound while you are resting or sitting? _____

Do you have strong food cravings? _____

Do you question bloating or fluid retention? _____

Do you need to urinate more frequently? _____

Has sex drive diminished? _____

Do you often have headaches or migraines? _____

Are you starting to put on weight around the middle? _____

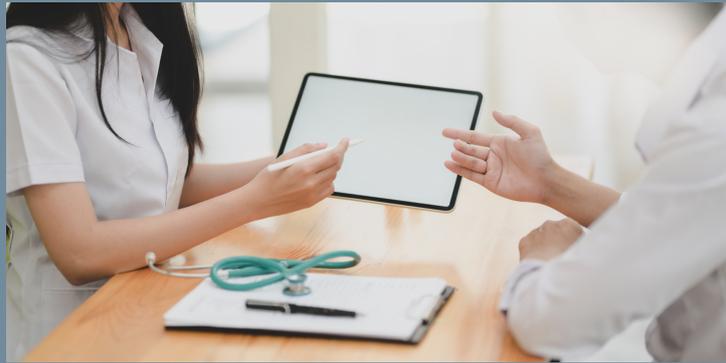
If your total score is between 10-18: don't worry you're not going crazy!
You're probably just beginning the perimenopause transition.

If your total score is between 19-28: diet, exercise, and stress management may or may not be enough to alleviate your symptoms. Additional nutrients and natural hormone therapy may make all the difference. It's definitely time to open up that dialogue with your doctor.

If your total score is above 28: Congratulations!! You're fully in perimenopause!

Keep in mind - this is NOT a diagnosis! This just gives you a general idea of what you should be looking for and where you might be in your journey. No matter if you scored a 10 or 30 I want you to use this information to begin your research, open up that dialogue, and make your health a top priority!

QUESTIONS YOU NEED TO BE ASKING YOUR OB/GYN



General Menopause Questions

- Am I experiencing symptoms of perimenopause or menopause, and what's the difference?
- Could my symptoms be caused by a condition other than menopause?
- I've lost my sex drive; is there anything I can do to get it back?
- I'm experiencing incontinence; will that go away? What can I do about it in the meantime?
- Do I still need to use birth control? If so, for how long?

Health and Lifestyle Concerns

- Do I need to make any changes in diet or exercise or how much I rest?
- Can spicy foods, warm temperatures, or stress trigger hot flashes? Should I try to avoid them?
- Can alcohol or coffee trigger hot flashes? Can drinking alcohol, smoking, or using drugs affect menopause symptoms in other ways?
- Would exercising more make my symptoms worse, or would it help improve them?
- Should I do Kegel exercises to help manage or prevent incontinence?
- How often should I get my blood pressure, cholesterol, and bone density screened?

Emotional Health

How is menopause likely to affect my relationships, and what can I do to improve my situation

Medications and Hormone Therapy for Menopause

Do you recommend any type of treatment for my menopause symptoms?

Are there risks associated with not treating menopause symptoms?

What type of drug are you prescribing for me, and how does it work?

How will the medication make me feel, and how will I know if it's working?

When can I expect to notice improvements in how I feel?

Could this medication interact with other medications I'm taking?

Are there any foods, drinks (such as alcohol), vitamins, herbal supplements, or over-the-counter drugs that I should avoid while taking this medication?

What are the benefits and risks of hormone therapy? What types of hormone therapies are available? Are there effective alternatives to hormone therapy?

Does my personal or my family's medical history play a role in the choice of hormone therapy that's safest for me?

Complementary and Alternative Therapies

Are there any complementary or alternative therapies I should consider?

Do you recommend any other herbs or food supplements?

Are there any over-the-counter remedies I should consider?

One Final Note



The most important thing to remember is that YOU are your best health advocate!

I do suggest that you have an open conversation about perimenopause with your doctor. Understand that menopause and perimenopause do not require treatments or "cures", even though some product developers have led us to believe otherwise.

Approximately 20% of women sail through perimenopause without any disruptive experiences. Another 20% have their worlds turned upside-down!! And those remaining 60% of women have experiences that are occasionally annoying or inconvenient. I hope you are a member of the smooth sailing club. And if not, then I also want you to know this:

- Experiences related to midlife hormonal shifts are real.
- You do not have to suck it up.
- If one health care provider dismisses your experiences or tells you "you're not there yet," you have other options.

It's common for us women to associate hormone fluctuations with simply being a factor of life! In our mid-thirties and throughout our forties, many of us aren't sure if we're dealing with perimenopause symptoms or are just stressed out due to our kids, work, marriage, and busy schedules.

It's also important to put the myth that menopause and any common experiences associated with it don't start until our fifties. This is completely incorrect!

Often, women put their health and wellness needs on the back burner, no matter how frustrating, annoying, or severe the symptoms can get. But I'm here to tell you that it's important that you spend a little time and energy (maybe even money) investigating these changes. I don't want you to brush it off as age-related issues when in fact it may be something more serious.

So, when should you consult your doctor or seek out the advice of a midlife health expert?

Here are a "few" symptoms possibly related to fluctuating hormones, midlife, and/or menopause and perimenopause that you should talk to a doctor about - this list is from the [The Menopause Book](#) by Pat Wingert and Barbara Kantrowitz. (another resource you should invest in.)

• Irregular cycles • Very heavy bleeding with clots, or periods that last more than a week • Frequent spotting between periods • Bleeding with pain or fever • Blood in your urine • Abrupt cessation of periods • Symptoms that are interfering with your ability to function (hot flashes, night sweats, erratic bleeding) • A missed period that could indicate pregnancy • Any bleeding that occurs after one year of no menstrual periods • Painful or swollen breasts • Vaginal dryness/pain during intercourse • Urinary problems/incontinence • More than one panic attack • A general sense of unhappiness or a persistent negative mood • Inability to experience pleasure or to enjoy the things you used to do • Constant worrying • Chronic anxiety • Obsessive thoughts or compulsive actions that you can't control • Suicidal thoughts or paranoia • Extreme fatigue, wired-but-tired, and/or sleep changes such as insomnia, inability to stay asleep, or oversleeping • Significant weight changes • Memory lapses that make it difficult for you to function normally • Profound difficulty reading, writing, or speaking • Anger or rage • Itchy or restless legs • Changes to skin and hair or hair loss • Family history of thyroid problems

When it comes to your health, I encourage you to build a midlife health team—and for YOU to be the fearless leader of that team.

You are the best person to be navigating this season with the help of some awesome wingmen/women including the following specialists: Your general practitioner, neuropathologist, gynecologist, doctor of natural medicine, registered nurse/nurse practitioner, registered dietitian, acupuncturist, chiropractor, yoga instructor, masseuse, health and wellness coach, counselor, aromatherapy/essential oil therapy, fitness trainer, vitamins and supplements specialists, and even your local farmer's market peeps!

The most important thing that you can do is find what works best for YOU!!

This journey of yours is just beginning whether you've just started or you just started noticing - the change is coming.

Remember, you are not alone. Together we can navigate this season with grace, dignity, and knowledge; **making this season you best season!!**



Thank You!

Let's stay in touch

I know that was a ton of information. And girlfriend even though this just may be just the start of YOUR journey, it is not the end of OUR journey together!

I know that as you continue to learn, investigate, and explore this new season you are going to have a ton more questions.

That's perfect! That is exactly what I do.

I encourage to stay in touch, whether that means following me on Facebook, Instagram, signing up for my weekly emails, blog posts, or just scheduling a free chat, I'm here to help you navigate this new, crazy, awesome season called midlife!!

Here's to your health and our new friendship!



KAREN CEREZO

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Continue the Journey

THRIVING IN MIDLIFE:

HOW TO NAVIGATING PERIMENOPAUSE AND BEYOND

My 7 week signature course is for women dealing with age and hormone related issues - like weight gain, fatigue, mood swings, hot flashes, decreased sleep, stress, incontinence, low libido and want to find some relief while navigating this new season.

It's for women 40 and over who are curious about their changing bodies, who want to learn a variety of strategies to minimize the discomfort that comes with some common peri/menopause symptoms.

It's for women 40 and over willing to make small but meaningful lifestyle changes for happy hormones, better sleep, more energy, a balanced mood, and who are committed to having a vibrant "second act" of life.

It's for anyone that has decided that their physical and mental health and overall wellness should be a top priority.

My goal is to put you on the path to making this season in your life your absolute best season!



Client Transformations

I loved Karen's 7 week Peri-menopause course! There is a lot of reading BUT a plethora of excellent information, tips and tricks! I now know so many more things about my body and different signs of Perimenopause! I have been informed of questions I can visit with my gynecologist about; things I would never have thought about asking. I loved the section on sleep and how it impacts your brain! This program has really taught me so much and just reinforced the fact of how important it is to know my body and take care of it! You will definitely benefit from this program!

~ Christy S. Round Rock, TX

At 51, I went into Karen's 7 week course wanting to better understand perimenopause and beyond knowing that I had very basic knowledge on the subject (maybe less than basic). What I came away with was feeling better equipped to handle these years ahead of me, and with confidence that perimenopause and menopause are a part of my life as a woman that I no longer need to fear.

Some of the important takeaways for me personally were learning more about what I need to discuss with my doctor & what tests to ask for; how my sex life can be affected by peri/menopause, as well as how to keep that aspect of my life healthy; and how to make my diet and exercise program important in my life during this shift, especially keeping in mind the hormonal changes I may be experiencing.

Taking this 7-week course can give you tools and knowledge to take control of your body and your emotions as you traverse through a time in life that is often swept under the rug, but can be very debilitating.

~ Bridgette H. Temecula, CA.