



HEALTHIER, LONGER,
BETTER LIVES

MENOPAUSE FACTSHEET

October 2023



Menopause is a natural process experienced by the majority of women and some people who are transgender or non-binary. The word 'menopause' refers to the last or final menstrual period. When a woman* has had no periods for 12 consecutive months, she is considered to be postmenopausal.

Most women become menopausal naturally between the ages of 45 and 55 years, with the average age of onset in Australia at 51 years. The perimenopause is the time preceding the menopause to one year after the menopause, and is characterised by hormonal fluctuation, anovulatory cycles and onset of cycle irregularity and symptoms.

Only 20% of women report no menopausal symptoms, leaving 80% of people experiencing symptoms at some time, with 20% classified as severe. Typical symptoms commonly reported by peri- and postmenopausal women include hot flushes, night sweats and sleeping difficulties, bodily aches and pains, dry skin, vaginal dryness, loss of libido, urinary frequency, and mood and memory changes. Hot flushes and night sweats are the hallmarks of menopause, occurring in approximately 75% of postmenopausal women, with 25% of these being severely affected. Menopause is associated with adverse metabolic and bone changes leading to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease and osteoporosis.

According to Australia's 2021 Census, 50.7% of the population (25.4 million) were female and 19.3% of the population are aged between 40-54 years. Now that women live around one third of their lives after menopause, optimising physical and mental health during this time is becoming more important.

Menopause and our Health

Managing menopause requires a comprehensive assessment including symptoms, risk of chronic disease, lifestyle and appropriate screening and development of an individualised plan incorporating the woman's treatment goals and risk: benefit analysis.

Management options include: lifestyle measures, non-pharmacological, contraception, non-hormonal and menopausal hormone therapies.

Menopause and Work

Menopause often intersects with a critical career stage during which women are most likely to move into top leadership positions; women are coming into management and leadership roles while experiencing symptoms. If we want to continue to move the dial on women in leadership roles then we need to be addressing menopause at work. The Australian Government has included a priority area for supporting women and their health care providers to manage the effects of menopause.

AIA Australia has partnered with the Australasian Menopause Society (AMS) to raise awareness and end stigma in order to foster inclusive workplaces where people are psychologically safe to speak up and discuss their menopause symptoms and experience as well as to provide support to ensure we all have a workplace that is set up for all our people. People experiencing the symptoms of menopause require the same level of support and understanding at work as anyone experiencing any ongoing health condition

Menopause is a gender and age-equity issue and remains one of the last "unspoken" issues in workplaces. In addition to workplaces, a supportive partner and family can significantly impact the menopause experience.

*AIA recognises that some individuals who undergo menopause do not identify as women.

Menopausal Hormone Therapy (MHT) (Also known as Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT))

The first clinical trials on MHT and chronic postmenopausal conditions lead to the 2002 Women's Health Initiative (WHI) showing that MHT had more detrimental than beneficial effects. The negative results of the study received wide publicity and messaging was that MHT had more risks than benefits for all women (including increased risk of Breast Cancer). A reanalysis of the WHI trial was performed, and new studies showed that the use of MHT in younger women or in early postmenopausal women had a beneficial effect on the cardiovascular system, reducing coronary disease and all-cause mortality. However, the public opinion on MHT has not changed, leading to negative consequences for women's health and quality of life.

Resources:

- [AMS Fact Sheets](#)
- [Find an AMS Doctor](#)
- [Australian Government, National Women's Health Strategy 2020 to 2030](#)
- [The Controversial History of Hormone Replacement Therapy](#)
- [Navigating menopause together: How partners can help](#)
- [Lifestyle and behavioural modifications for menopausal symptoms](#)