



# Menopausal Skin

## The stages of menopause and its effects on the skin

by Joanna Kula

Menopause is a topic that's often overlooked in esthetics school, even though 100% of women will experience it in their lifetime. As skincare professionals, we must learn and understand the various skin changes associated with it to properly guide our clients and address their skincare needs at every stage of life.

### What is menopause?

Menopause means the "ceasing of menstruation." A woman enters menopause when her ovaries stop releasing eggs and producing estrogen and progesterone. Menopause is a gradual process that can take many years and usually starts in a woman's mid to late 40s and end somewhere around her 50s.

### The Three States of Menopause

#### PERIMENOPAUSE

During this early stage of menopause, usually between 45 and 50, estrogen levels start to decline and become more erratic. Many women experience symptoms such as hot flashes, night sweats, irregular or missed periods, skin changes as well as emotional and physical changes. This stage may last anywhere from three to ten years.

While female hormones decrease, androgens (mainly testosterone) remain unchecked and may cause some unpleasant side effects. These can often include adult acne on the jawline and chin, increased sebum production, and excess facial hair growth. The sebaceous glands and pores may also become larger, and the skin can become unbalanced with dry patches and oily areas. Many women experience rosacea symptoms and increased sensitivity as well.

#### MENOPAUSE

A woman will reach menopause when her period stops for a full year. The average age of menopause is 51, but it can vary significantly based on the individual. At this stage, the estrogen levels plummet further, and symptoms such as fatigue, weight gain, hair loss, and skin thinning become more noticeable.

Because estrogens play a significant role in skin physiology, the lack of this essential hormone profoundly affects the skin's aging process. The most notable changes are a progressive loss of collagen and elastin, slower wound

healing, a decrease in hyaluronic acid production, and a higher susceptibility to free-radical damage. The skin starts to lose its firmness, tone, and vitality and is likely to become dry, dehydrated, fragile, and more pigmented as a result.

#### POSTMENOPAUSE

When a woman has gone through menopause, she enters postmenopause, usually around age 51-55. Estrogen levels will remain stable but relatively low for the remainder of her life.

From this point onward, collagen and elastin will continue to break down faster, and the production of these complex proteins will slow down significantly. The face may start to change shape due to a loss of bone and subcutaneous fat. As the skin loses elasticity and support, the cheeks, jawline, and neck usually start to drop, and wrinkles become deeper and more pronounced. Overall, post-menopausal skin will appear looser, thinner, and less vibrant.

### SKINCARE AND AGE MANAGEMENT

Understanding the physical and physiological changes in the skin before, during, and after menopause is the first step towards managing the skin's natural aging process. In the next article, you will learn how to adequately address and mitigate these changes and guide your clients towards achieving a healthier complexion no matter what age. ■



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She has a science background and over 10 years experience in the treatment room, working alongside the industry's top leaders and training with elite skincare lines. Joanna is passionate about skin and dedicated to empowering others through education. She hopes to see the future of the industry as a thriving playground for all skincare professionals.

