

# The Real Deal on Menopause

Yes, it's going to happen. Does it have to be miserable? Definitely not. Your guide to what to expect as these hormonal changes affect your body and how to navigate the transition so you feel your best.

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Perimenopause is the transitional time (two to seven years) before menopause, which is defined as when your periods have stopped completely.

# Hair

## WHAT TO EXPECT

As your ovaries start to produce less progesterone and estrogen, your luscious locks may seem, well, not quite as luscious. “Estrogen plays a big role in the hair growth cycle, so when it drops, you may notice more hair in your hairbrush,” says Keira Barr, M.D., founder of Resilient Health Institute.

## WORK WITH IT

Know that your hair rebounds somewhat once your body gets used to the lower hormone levels, says Rebecca Dunsmoor-Su, M.D., director of menopause and an ob-gyn at Swedish Medical Center in Seattle and chief medical officer for [gennev.com](http://gennev.com). Washing your hair less often and not drying it on high heat can keep hair from becoming dry. Using products that hydrate and strengthen hair will also help. Barr likes Better Not Younger products ([better-notyounger.com](http://better-notyounger.com)) with argan oil and B vitamins. As you shampoo, massage your scalp. It increases blood flow to hair follicles, which can add volume, Barr says.

# Skin

## WHAT TO EXPECT

When estrogen levels go down, collagen—which keeps your skin plump and firm—also drops. And like those other lovely years when hormones are wacky, you might get acne.

## WORK WITH IT

Try skincare products that mimic what collagen does and also prevent damage. That means sunscreen every day and a mask with hyaluronic acid. Barr’s picks: Caire Triple Lift Molecule Mask (\$52; [cairebeauty.com](http://cairebeauty.com)), which has a hyaluronic acid base, and EltaMD UV Elements Broad-Spectrum SPF 44 Sunscreen (\$39; [eltamd.com](http://eltamd.com)). You can also ask the dermatologist about acne meds and anti-aging products.

# Eyes

## WHAT TO EXPECT

The drop in hormones can impact tear production, causing dry eyes.

## WORK WITH IT

Talk to your doctor about what to use if you notice discomfort in your eyes or vision changes.



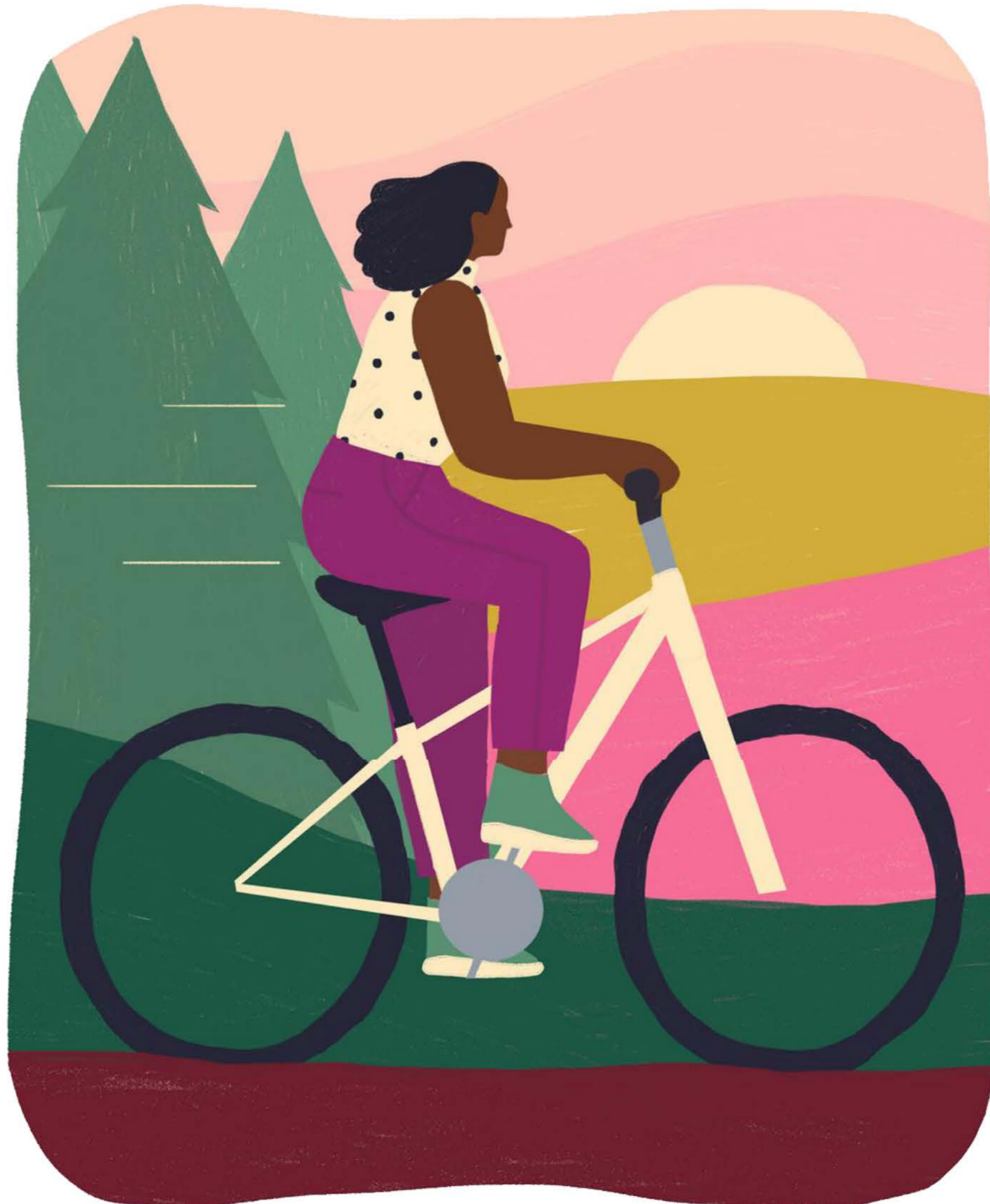
# Mood

## WHAT TO EXPECT

“During perimenopause, your brain doesn’t do well on changing progesterone and estrogen levels,” Dunsmoor-Su says. You may experience anxiety and mood swings. Perimenopause also raises the risk for depression, especially if you’ve had it in the past. Once you’ve hit menopause, the mood symptoms tend to ease.

## WORK WITH IT

“A regular sleep schedule can reduce stress,” says Stephanie Faubion, M.D., medical director of The North American Menopause Society and director of Mayo Clinic Women’s Health. Exercising routinely also can help. And consider cognitive behavioral therapy, antidepressants, or anti-anxiety meds; they might help you get through the rough spots.



# Exercise & Weight

## WHAT TO EXPECT

While it's true that you're prone to gaining weight during perimenopause and menopause, it's not necessarily a fait accompli, especially if you're already a regular exerciser. "We see some insulin resistance during the menopause transition," Dunsmoor-Su says. "That means we're slightly less good at processing calories, which can lead to fat around your middle."

## WORK WITH IT

Try doing things differently diet- and exercise-wise. To fight age-related muscle loss, focus more on resistance training. "Muscle burns a ton of calories, so when you lose muscle as you get older, you burn fewer calories all day long," Mayo Clinic's Faubion says. "Weight lifting helps keep your muscle mass steady, which in turn helps maintain your metabolic rate." As for diet, she advises reducing simple carbohydrates like white bread and pasta and watching your alcohol intake.

'MENOPAUSE CAN BE A TIME WHEN YOU FEEL YOUR MOST  
CONFIDENT AND EMPOWERED.'

—*REBECCA DUNSMOOR-SU, M.D.*

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## A NOTE ON SLEEP

Night sweats—hot flashes during sleep—are a big z's stealer. Keep yourself cool by switching sheets and pj's to natural fibers like all-cotton and linen. Hormone therapy has also been shown to be very effective in reducing, even eliminating, night sweats.

## HORMONE THERAPY

Taking hormone therapy can help alleviate hot flashes, sleep disturbances, and more. Studies showing that it may increase the risk for breast cancer have made women understandably cautious, but the risks have been reevaluated with recent research. Talk with your doctor to weigh the risks and benefits given your family and personal medical history (especially if you've had breast cancer). Many women can safely take hormone therapy under the guidance of a menopause expert, says Lauren Streicher, M.D., medical director of Northwestern Medicine Center for Sexual Medicine and Menopause.

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