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AN EXPERT GUIDE TO

Navigating Perimenopause

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Welcome to your guide to navigating perimenopause.

If you are starting to experience symptoms commonly associated with menopause, such as hot flashes, for the first time, you might be entering perimenopause. In this guide, we will walk you through what perimenopause is, when it starts, and what to do about your symptoms.

Our goal is to make this mysterious period of transition in life, well, less mysterious! Let's dive in together.

XX,
Team Bintö

What is perimenopause?

Technically speaking, "perimenopause" means "around menopause," and refers to the time in a woman's life when her body starts transitioning to menopause, marking the end of her reproductive years. Women enter this phase of life at different ages, some noticing signs around their early to mid 40s, but others much earlier, in their mid to late 30s. Studies have revealed that perimenopause can start earlier in women who smoke, have a family history of early menopause, have undergone cancer treatment, or who have undergone a hysterectomy.

THE CAVEAT:

Being perimenopausal does not mean you are in menopause yet. Perimenopause can start **10 or more years prior** to menopause itself, as your ovaries gradually start producing less and less estrogen. Women's estrogen levels typically start to decrease naturally around 30, with a steep drop off at 35. For some women, this means perimenopause starts a lot earlier than they might have thought it would.

How Can I Tell If I'm In Perimenopause?

During this period of time, your estrogen levels rise and fall unevenly, leading to a number of bodily changes. If you have started to notice the following five key indicators, you might be entering perimenopause:

IRREGULAR CYCLES

An irregular cycle is one of the first symptoms you may notice. While there is no clear start date for perimenopause, medical professionals typically mark the beginning as the first time you notice cycle irregularity. As your body begins to transition, you may experience worsening PMS, or periods that are heavier or lighter than usual. While irregular periods are a typical symptom, you should see a doctor if your bleeding is very heavy, lasts a long time, or regularly occurs less than 21 days apart.

If your cycle is typically irregular, or you take hormonal birth control, it may be hard to identify this first symptom. In addition, many women don't realize that perimenopause can start as early as their mid-30s, and so may attribute this irregularity to something else. If you suspect you might be starting to approach this stage of life, you can ask your healthcare provider to order a blood test to check your estrogen levels. They should be able to give you a definitive diagnosis from these results.

HOT FLASHES

Studies indicate that for many women, hot flashes increase in prevalence as you get closer to menopause. That being said, a woman's experience can differ based on a number of factors. One study found that race may play a role in the duration and frequency of hot flashes. Black and Native American women reported the highest prevalence of hot flashes, whereas Chinese and Japanese women had the lowest and shorter overall duration. The same study found that women with higher BMI experienced worse hot flashes during perimenopause, but milder ones after reaching menopause. Cigarette smoking, anxiety, and depression were all associated with increased hot flashes.

SLEEP ISSUES

Difficulty sleeping is a common symptom of perimenopause. In an NIH study, 37.7% of the women reported difficulty sleeping. It is believed that these sleep changes can be attributed to hot flashes, as part of the underlying hormonal changes your body is undergoing.

VAGINAL DRYNESS

The next symptom to keep an eye out for is vaginal dryness, which occurs in 25%–33% of perimenopausal women. This can cause itching and irritation, and might even cause pain or discomfort during sex. Luckily, there are treatments to relieve these symptoms. You can purchase vaginal lubricants or moisturizers over the counter, and there are certain hormonal treatments known to help as well.

MOOD CHANGES

As is typical with any major hormonal change in your body, you may feel irritable, or experience mood swings as a part of perimenopause. Symptoms of depression and anxiety are common. However, it is important to make a key distinction between depressive symptoms and major depression, which is a debilitating and life-threatening psychological condition.

Depressive symptoms are observed in about 27.8% of perimenopausal women, according to NIH. These can include feeling lonely, having restless sleep, or having a poor appetite. If you find yourself feeling bothered by things that don't usually bother you, or just generally feeling off, you can take the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale, or the CES-D. A score higher than 16 would indicate that you are experiencing depressive symptoms.

Again, depressive *symptoms* are NOT the same as diagnosed depression. Major depression is identified if you exhibit **5 or more** of the following symptoms for at least two weeks:

- Depressed, sad mood
- Decreased interest or pleasure in activities
- Significant weight loss/gain or decreased/increased appetite
- Insomnia or hypersomnia
- Psychomotor agitation/retardation
- Fatigue
- Feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt
- Decreased ability to think or concentrate; indecisiveness
- Recurrent thoughts of death, suicidal ideation with or without a plan, or suicide attempt

How to Get Help

If you have experienced any of these symptoms, even if they have not been present for two weeks, we recommend that you reach out to your healthcare provider immediately. You can also make use of the following services:

Live Chat with Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: [998lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Dial 988

National Alliance on Mental Illness: 1-800-950-6264 or text 62640

National Network of Depression Centers Treatment Locator:

<https://nndc.org/resource-links/>

Fortunately, as a symptom of perimenopause, major depression is far less prevalent than depressive symptoms; NIH observed it in 3% of perimenopausal women.

That being said, depression is a very serious condition and should not be taken lightly. Don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it.

If you aren't sure where to start, you can always chat with a member of the Binto clinical team at info@mybinto.com or through our web chat portal at mybinto.com.

How Do I Manage My Symptoms?

So, your period has been a little irregular, you aren't getting enough sleep at night and you're having hot flashes. What now? There are a few well-known treatments that can help you manage your perimenopausal symptoms.

HORMONAL THERAPY

One common way to treat the symptoms of perimenopause is hormonal therapy. This typically comes in the form of low doses of estrogen and progestin, prescribed by a doctor, to help balance out perimenopausal fluctuations. It can be administered like hormonal contraception, in a pill form, ring, or an IUD. The method you choose will affect how the treatment works in your body. For example, releasing estrogen locally through a vaginal ring can help relieve vaginal dryness or itching, but might not be as effective at fighting hot flashes. Some side effects can include bleeding, bloating, breast tenderness, mood changes, headaches, and nausea, but many women find it to be a helpful way of managing their symptoms.

SUPPLEMENTS

If the idea of hormone replacements and prescriptions sounds scary to you, don't worry! Certain over the counter supplements, like Binto's multivitamin, contain ingredients that have been shown to help women navigate this transition.

Vitamin B12 can help manage symptoms of fatigue, weakness, constipation or mood changes. It plays an important role in the production of:

- Serotonin, the "feel-good" neurotransmitter that controls mood
- Dopamine, the neurotransmitter that controls motivation and feelings of enjoyment
- Melatonin, a hormone produced at night to help you fall asleep

One of B12's most important jobs is helping with methylation, or breaking down excess hormones in your liver. This in turn helps to moderate the balance of estrogen in your body. At a time when your estrogen levels may be fluctuating, B12 is key for stabilizing them.

Vitamin B6 has been shown to help alleviate the more severe PMS symptoms associated with perimenopause, like mood changes and irritability. B6 can also help improve your mood and emotions.

Vitamin D3 is very important for maintaining your bone health as your estrogen levels start to dip. You can get it from fatty fish, egg yolk, butter, and liver, or when your skin is exposed to sunlight. At Binto, our women's multivitamin is formulated with the amount of vitamin D your body needs at this time.



Pre- and Probiotics help to maintain a healthy gut, which is crucial for the metabolization of hormones. If you do end up testing out a hormone replacement, these will become even more important to make sure your body is processing the supplemented hormones in the way that it should. The gut-brain connection can also help promote and stabilize your mental health. At Binto, we combine your pre- and probiotics into one easy-to-take synbiotic supplement.

Herbal Extracts can support several symptoms. Binto's menopause supplements contain herbs like black cohosh extract, which has been shown to reduce average severity and number of hot flashes. We also include additional calcium and blueberry fruit extract in our multivitamin formula to protect your bones and keep them strong.

PRO TIP: MAINTAIN A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

Regular exercise has been shown to help stabilize mood changes and improve the quality of sleep. Avoiding smoking and caffeine, as well as spicy foods, can help reduce the frequency and intensity of your hot flashes. Relaxation exercises like meditation help reduce your levels, which in turn can help manage mood changes, sleep issues, and hot flashes.

Can I Still Get Pregnant?

For some women, perimenopause starts earlier than expected. This can be startling for women in their mid to late 30s who are still thinking about having children. If you fall into that category, don't get too worried just yet – you still have some time.

Perimenopause is characterized by two stages: early and late transition. During your early transition, you are still having menstrual cycles, producing eggs, and ovulating – meaning you can still get pregnant. Just because you may be experiencing some perimenopausal symptoms does not mean having a child is completely out of the question. This time in your life simply refers to the very gradual slowing down of your body's reproductive functions. On the other hand, if you do NOT want to get pregnant, you should still keep up your birth control regimen even if you are perimenopausal.

While it may be less likely, it is still possible to conceive so long as you are still ovulating. That being said, a woman's fertility does start to decline as she approaches her late 30s and beyond. Symptoms of perimenopause do mean that the end of your reproductive years is approaching. Conception will become more difficult as you move into your late transition, as your menstrual cycle will eventually stop completely, making it impossible to get pregnant.

TRYING TO GET PREGNANT? Try COQ10. This antioxidant promotes healthy ovulation and supports the quality of matured eggs by preventing damage from free radicals.

We don't believe in a one-size-fits-all approach to healthcare.

At Binto, we know how can stressful it can be navigating new areas of your health That's why we tailor your healthcare regiment to your personal goals and concerns. If you are experiencing perimenopausal symptoms earlier than expected, we encourage you to reach out to our team of providers – we can help you figure out the best combination of supplements to support your needs.

If you would like to get started, take our health survey at mybinto.com. You can also email us at info@mybinto.com or chat with us online for additional support.

SOURCES: This e-book was written by Caitlin McNamara.

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/perimenopause/symptoms-causes/syc-20354666>

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/15224-menopause-perimenopause-and-postmenopause>

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