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**Our Facilities:**

Max Devki Devi Heart & Vascular Institute, Saket  
2, Press Enclave Road, Saket, New Delhi-110 017  
Phone: +91-11-2651 5050, Fax: +91-11-2651 0050

Max Super Speciality Hospital, Saket  
1, Press Enclave Road, Saket, New Delhi-110 017  
Phone: +91-11-6611 5050, 6611 4545, Fax: +91-11-6611 5077

Max Balaji Hospital™, Patparganj  
108 A, Indraprastha Extension, Patparganj, New Delhi-110 092  
Phone: +91-11-4303 3333, Fax: +91-11-2223 5563

Max Hospital™, Gurgaon\*  
Block-B, Sushant Lok - Phase I, Gurgaon-122 001  
Phone: +91-124-6623 000, Fax: +91-124-6623 111

Max Hospital™, Pitampura  
Near TV Tower, Pitampura, Wazirpur District Centre, New Delhi-110 034  
Phone: +91-11-2735 1844, Fax: +91-11-2735 7229

Max Hospital™, Noida  
A-364, Sector 19, Noida-201 301  
Phone: +91-120-254 9999, 253 5500, Fax: +91-120-253 5557

Max Medcentre™, Panchsheel Park  
N-110, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi-110 017  
Phone: +91-11-2649 9870, Fax: +91-11-2649 9860

Max Speciality Clinic (Eye Care & Dental Care), Panchsheel Park  
S-347, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi-110 017  
Phone: +91-11-2649 9880, Fax: +91-11-2649 9860

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# Menopause



# Max Healthcare

Caring for you... for life

## Max Healthcare

Max Healthcare is India's first comprehensive provider of standard, seamless, integrated and world-class healthcare at all its locations.

Our highly qualified and trained doctors and nurses ensure that you can avail of the latest in medical science. Max Healthcare has made sure treatment is not just curative but preventive as well. And keeping your needs in focus, we have made the entire process personalised, simple and transparent. A state-of-the-art Hospital IT System ensures your records are available online at the touch of a button at any of our facilities. We are available to you round-the-clock, wherever you want us to be, for medical care, for you and your family.

We believe you have the right to know and understand your treatment. This brochure will help you learn and manage your lifestyle better.

Max Healthcare - Caring for you...for life.

## There is no fear of AIDS after menopause

You are still equally vulnerable to diseases such as AIDS after Menopause. Always use a condom if you are sexually active.

Menopause is not a twilight zone. It is merely a 'pause' before you move on to a beginning. It offers you the opportunity to take special care of yourself for a healthier life. Make the most of it.

Your mother is your best guide when to expect Menopause. Her experience can provide you with the best clue.

Familial and genetic factors effect the onset of Menopause. If she began Menopause late, there's a good chance that you will start it late and vice versa.

### Points to bear in mind :

- Eat a nutritious diet
- Include calcium in your diet or through supplements
- Stay calm during hot flushes
- Discuss these problems with family and friends
- Exercise regularly
- Include bladder control in your exercise routine
- Consult your doctor on countering vaginal dryness
- Learn new ways to relax
- Avoid smoking

### Note

The information provided in this brochure is not a substitute for professional medical care. Please call the nearest facility to confirm the availability of services.

## Menopause

Menopause is a natural transition a woman makes in her journey through life. It is often linked to a bridge that a woman crosses into a new dawn where she discovers a more confident self.

Undoubtedly though, Menopause is a difficult bridge to cross. It is peppered with a large measure of emotional stress as each woman experiences basic biological changes within her.

This is a time when a woman needs understanding and care, when myths need to be brushed aside with credible information. This brochure attempts to meet this need with well-researched information. It has been compiled as a ready reckoner with answers to commonly asked questions. It is broadly classified into

- General information
- Causes
- Symptoms
- Potential Side-effects
- Care and Guidance
- Misconceptions about Menopause

## General information

### What is Menopause?

Menopause is the cessation of a woman's menstrual periods. Just as puberty signals the start of the 'child bearing phase' in a woman's life, Menopause marks the end of child bearing and the beginning of the next phase in a woman's life.

For many women today, the end of fertility brings a sense of freedom. They feel more empowered and energised than in their younger years. For some women, however, Menopause coupled with their mid-life emotional crisis can contribute to serious health problems.

For many women, however, Menopause is a time to focus on a good health programme. It is a phase when women need to care for themselves, more than ever before.

## Will I go through Menopause?

Yes, every woman goes through Menopause. It is a natural part of the life cycle.

## When will Menopause begin for me?

There is no fixed age for the onset of Menopause but it usually occurs between the age of 35 and 55 years. No woman can be sure when she will go through Menopause, as each one has a unique biological cycle.

Menopause does not occur overnight. The changes set in slowly, usually over a period of 3 to 5 years.

Menopause is complete when a woman has not had a menstrual period for 12 months in succession.

## Causes

### What causes Menopause?

**Natural Menopause** - This is caused by a natural decrease in the hormones produced by your body.

Natural Menopause is a gradual biological occurrence, not a 'hormonal deficiency disease'.

When you are younger, your body produces hormones like estrogen to prepare you for pregnancy. These are the hormones that cause monthly periods.

Menopause begins when the level of hormones in your body starts to decline. With lower levels of hormones, your periods become erratic and eventually stop.

**Surgical Menopause** - Some women need to have their ovaries removed surgically. This leads to an immediate Menopause, unlike the gradual process of natural Menopause. Irrespective of the age at which such a surgery is undertaken, Menopause follows right away. This is called 'Surgical Menopause'. A woman going through surgical Menopause usually faces more problems and almost always needs medical assistance to help her cope.

Sometimes a woman's ovaries are removed when she has her uterus (womb) removed for fibroids or cancer.

## Misconceptions about Menopause

The experiences related to Menopause have many a years spun around them. We would like to dismiss some of these for you.

### It is all 'down hill' after Menopause

This is certainly not true as many women report feeling far more confident and full of life following Menopause

### Your looks will deteriorate after Menopause

A few wrinkles that you might notice appearing during Menopause are related to the natural aging process and have no connection with Menopause.

### Menopause causes depression

Hormonal fluctuation can cause temporary mood swings, but any prolonged depression is not caused by Menopause.

### Menopause means end of intercourse and romance

On the contrary, with no more worries about pregnancy, many women feel far more romantic and sexually inclined.

### Hysterectomy is the best way to deal with Menopause

Absolutely not. Hysterectomy is a removal of the uterus and not necessarily that of ovaries. Moreover, the removal of ovaries too does not prevent Menopause related problems.

### You can not get pregnant once your period stops

Since Menopause is not complete till you have missed 12 menstrual periods in succession, you can still get pregnant even after missing periods for a few months. Please consult your doctor about the best kind of birth control at this stage.

## Will I need treatment?

While most women may not need any treatment for symptoms during Menopause, some may benefit from treatment. Since estrogen levels are decreasing in all women during Menopause, an Estrogen Replacement Therapy (ERT) may be recommended in some cases. This could

- Relieve dry vagina and hot flushes
- Prevent heart related ailments and Osteoporosis.

But these treatments can have some side-effects too. Therefore they are prescribed after evaluating each case individually.

## Do I need to see my doctor

Yes, advice from a good doctor can be of great use as you go through Menopause. This is a good time to visit your doctor or nurse at Max Healthcare. Inquire about our **Preventive Health Programme for Women** for a complete examination and professional evaluation of your individual needs. Talk to your doctor about your symptoms and seek advice on what you can do to reduce your chances of developing weak bones and heart related ailments. A caring and informative environment can make a significant difference in preventing menopause related problems and to help you lead a healthier lifestyle.

During your visit, you could consult our professionals on all these measures that will help you stay healthy, such as

- A complete examination by a gynaecologist
- Breast examination and mammography
- PAP smear
- Pathological investigations

## Need to see my doctor to know:

- The best ways to exercise
- The right food to eat
- How to stop smoking (if you do smoke)
- Calcium pills and vitamins intake
- HRT and other treatments
- Any other concerns or worries

Surgical removal of the uterus is called a Hysterectomy. But the removal of the uterus alone does not cause Menopause. That happens only when the ovaries are removed.

## Symptoms

### How will I know when I'm going through Menopause?

The first hint that Menopause might be commencing could be changes in the pattern of your periods. You might

- Miss periods
- Have periods more often
- Bleed between periods
- Bleed much less than usual

These changes could be indications that your body is preparing itself for Menopause.

These variations in periods may last for a year or more.

**Bleeding more than usual is not a sign of Menopause.**

Be sure to see your doctor if that happens.

### Hot flushes

Hot flushes are sudden feelings of heat in the face and upper part of the body. These last a few minutes. Hot flushes can also occur while you are asleep. These may cause sweating and disturbed sleep.

### Dry vagina

During Menopause, the vagina could become dry. This may cause itching and pain during intercourse.

### Bladder Control

Many women begin to experience a loss in bladder control during Menopause. This could cause a leak in urine, especially when they sneeze or cough.

## Mood Swings

Menopause can cause emotional changes. With the hormonal levels changing in your body, you could experience unexplained mood swings. You might find yourself depressed, exhausted or cranky for no apparent reason. However, if you continue to feel this way most of the times, please consult your doctor or nurse.

## Other possible symptoms

Some women develop additional symptoms at this stage. These may include weight gain, aching bones or forgetfulness. While some of these changes might be due to Menopause, others could be for a different reason or simply because you are getting older. Remember, please mention any such changes you notice to your doctor.

## Will all this happen to me?

You may or may not experience all the symptoms. Some women notice many changes during Menopause, while others notice just a few. The experience of Menopause is unique for each woman.

## Possible Side-Effects

### What are the long term effects of Menopause?

Menopause can sometimes affect different parts of your body and make you susceptible to other ailments.

### Heart-related ailments

Menopause makes you vulnerable to the risk of heart related ailments. This is further aggravated if you

- Smoke
- Have high blood pressure
- Have high cholesterol
- Do not exercise
- Have family history of heart ailments

### Osteoporosis

The presence of estrogen in our body also protects our bones. With a drop in estrogen levels after Menopause, women are more likely to develop Osteoporosis. This leads to weakening of the bones, thereby increasing the risk of fractures, particularly in the back, hip and arm.

## Care and Guidance

### What can I do to feel better?

There are many lifestyle changes that can make you feel better when Menopause starts. You owe it to yourself to make these changes and focus on your health at this time. These will also help to keep your heart healthy and your bones strong.