

Your
complete
guide to *navigating*
MENOPAUSE

|
BUSBEE STYLE
|

If you're a woman 35 or older, there's a good chance you're already in perimenopause—and you may not even know it! In fact, perimenopause can start up to 10 years before menopause officially begins.

I discovered I was entering menopause at just 42 when I missed a period and thought I might be pregnant. Turns out, I wasn't. Instead, my doctor told me that my FSH (follicle-stimulating hormone) levels were in the menopause range—and I was in shock!

This stage of life can feel overwhelming for so many reasons. For starters, no two women experience perimenopause or menopause the same way. Your journey—your symptoms, your timeline, and even your treatment options—are uniquely yours.

To make things even more challenging, many medical professionals aren't adequately trained to recognize or treat perimenopause effectively. That's why self-advocacy is *essential* when it comes to getting the care and support you need.

We created this resource to help you navigate this transition with confidence. Inside, you'll find key facts about symptoms, treatment options, and most importantly, how to advocate for your health.

You do not have to accept this stage as your "new normal" or just white-knuckle your way through menopause. Knowledge is power—and you deserve to feel your best at every age!

xoxo,
Erin



What are YOUR symptoms?

It's not just about irregular periods and hot flashes. There are dozens of symptoms of perimenopause and menopause that can range from uncomfortable to incredibly challenging. Many of these symptoms may surprise you:

- Joint Pain
- Muscle Pain
- Anxiety
- Memory Loss or Lapse
- Brain Fog
- Mood Changes
- Dry Eyes
- Itchy Skin
- Stress
- Depression
- Weight Gain
- Difficulty Focusing
- Brittle Nails
- Hair Loss & Thinning Hair
- Dizziness
- Hot Flashes
- Difficulty Sleeping
- Extreme Fatigue
- Change in Taste

- Decreased Libido
- Frequent UTIs or Bacterial Vaginosis
- Urinary Changes
- Overactive Bladder
- Irregular or Racing Heartbeat
- Heart Palpitations
- Burning Mouth and/or Tongue
- Night Sweats
- Breast Soreness
- Headaches
- Vaginal Dryness
- Digestive Issues
- Irregular Periods
- Panic Attacks
- Tingling Limbs
- Allergies
- Electric Shock Sensations
- Osteoporosis
- Bloating

When I was 38, right after I had Elizabeth, I noticed very odd joint pain. I felt like I could barely walk up the stairs. I literally did not wear heels for 6 months, which for me is saying something. At the time, I chalked it up to an "advanced maternal age" issue. Looking back now, I realize I was in perimenopause, and this was just one of many symptoms I would face. No matter your symptoms, you are *not* alone.

Where to START

If you are anything like me, then most likely you feel overwhelmed by all the information. Perhaps you don't even know where to start. Well, that's why we created this guide, to take out the guesswork so you feel more confident and comfortable. A great first step is asking your general practitioner or OBGYN, whom you already have a relationship with, for guidance with menopause care. If these doctors have the proper training and are empathetic to your issues, they can be a wonderful option. Keep in mind that most doctors only get around an hour of menopausal care training in medical school so it's not unreasonable to ask them about their background and if it's something they treat regularly. Also, if these doctors do not have the right training, you can ask them if they know someone else who does. Word-of-mouth referrals are often the fastest and best way to find the right provider. Ask your friends. You can also use the [North American Menopause Society \(NAMS\) searchable directory](#) to find a specialist near you.

Additionally, there are some highly rated virtual options specializing in menopause that might be more accessible and convenient:

Midi Health - www.joinmidi.com

Alloy - www.myalloy.com

Evernow - www.evernow.com

Lile Wellness - www.lilewellness.com



I communicate with my doctor virtually, which works perfectly for me—especially since we live in a remote mountain town. After establishing a solid baseline through bloodwork, we now check my levels every six months to ensure everything stays on track.

Over the years, I've experimented with different hormone replacement therapy (HRT) dosages and types—including bio-identical and synthetic options in various forms like pills, patches, creams, and troches. After some trial and error, I finally found the right combination and dosage that works best for me: a mix of estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone in a troche form that dissolves at the gumline. I take it twice a day, once in the morning and again before bed. My goal has always been simple—to feel like myself again, just as I did before menopause.

Bottom line: Keep researching, testing, and advocating for yourself until you feel confident in your provider and the level of care you're receiving. Finding the right fit may take time and patience, but you deserve a doctor who truly understands and supports you through this journey.

Only about 20% of OB-GYN residency programs provide any menopause training.

According to a 2021 *New York Times* article, medical school students may spend as little as one hour and only as much as ten hours learning about menopause.

*You deserve to
feel amazing!*

HORMONE *Replacement* Therapy (HRT)

The results of a Women's Health Initiative (WHI) study in 2002 created widespread panic and fear about Hormone Replacement Therapy or HRT. The study indicated that HRT had more risks than benefits and could even cause breast cancer! This study instilled fear in an entire generation of women, leading many to avoid HRT altogether.

Years later, several studies showed that HRT does NOT increase your risk of getting breast cancer. In fact, studies like this one from The National Library of Medicine indicate HRT not only treats your uncomfortable menopausal symptoms, but also reduces all-cause mortality. Additional studies show HRT can improve your overall heart, bone, and brain health.

**“...ONE OF THE MOST
RECOMMENDED
TREATMENTS FOR
PERIMENOPAUSE AND
MENOPAUSE BY
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PROFESSIONALS...”**

While the narrative around HRT is changing, only about 4% of menopausal women use HRT. Hormone replacement therapy is one of the most recommended treatments for perimenopause and menopause by healthcare professionals because of the following:

- May lower risk of heart disease, heart attack, and heart failure
- Shown to reduce risk of colon cancer and diabetes
- Can improve sleep quality, which can boost mood, energy levels, and concentration

HRT isn't necessarily for everyone. As we mentioned in the beginning of this guide, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to menopausal care. The journey, from symptoms to treatments, is completely unique to every woman. You should ask your healthcare provider if HRT is right for you.

BIOIDENTICAL *VS* SYNTHETIC

Bioidentical hormones are basically artificial hormones that are chemically identical to the hormones we naturally produce in our bodies like estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone. They are often used to help address hormonal imbalances, by replenishing declining hormone levels. Bioidentical hormones are derived from plant sources and tailored to match your body's specific needs.

Even though some bio-identical hormones are approved by the Federal Drug Administration or FDA, keep in mind that the compounded ones are not subject to the same rigorous FDA standards. Also, it's worth noting that even though many claim that bioidentical hormones are "safer," than synthetic hormones, the [Mayo Clinic](#) reports there is no evidence to support that claim.

Synthetic hormones are man-made compounds designed to mimic natural hormones that women produce like estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone.

They are approved by the FDA and can be taken in many different forms like creams, pills, patches, troches, etc.

Ultimately what works best for you is very personal...and a decision you should make thoughtfully and carefully with your health care professional. Remember, finding the right dose and formula may take time and trial and error. Even though it can be frustrating, please try to stay the course and find the best plan for you. It really is worth it. YOU are worth it!

Bioidentical *VS* Synthetic

What You Need to Know

Supplements

If you can't or do not want to take hormone replacement therapy, do not despair, there are many supplements that can potentially help ease your peri and menopausal symptoms.

Of note, supplements are regulated by the FDA, but the rules and regulations for supplements are very different than those for drugs. Be sure to always consult your menopause provider before taking any new supplements.

Here is a list of the most recommended supplements by menopause specialists that may improve symptoms:

- Fiber – Improve weight management, energy, and mood
- Magnesium – Better sleep
- Vitamin D – Bone health
- Calcium – Prevent bone loss
- Black Cohosh – Hot flashes
- Omega 3 – Joint pain, stiffness, and heart health
- Pre/Probiotics – Better overall gut health and digestion
- Flaxseed – Night sweats
- Turmeric – Inflammation and anxiety
- Creatine – Increases energy and muscle mass
- Vitamin K2 – Bone, heart, blood, and brain health

Prescription Option:

Veozah – a fairly new, hormone-free prescription treatment aimed to directly block the source of hot flashes and night sweats.

**These supplements are in no way endorsed or encouraged by Busbee Style, LLC.*

“...POTENTIALLY
HELP EASE YOUR PERI
AND MENOPAUSAL
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Sexual WELLNESS

It's like nature's cruelest joke on women. You finally make it to menopause, after all those years of periods, cramps, moodiness, pregnancies, post-partum bodies, pap smears, and then wham-o – a whole new fun bag of symptoms appears like low libido, vaginal atrophy, dryness, and recurring infections. This can lead to painful intercourse, unpleasant odor, and disrupted vaginal biome, among other things. Don't lose hope, there are definitely ways to improve your sexual wellness.

MOST RECOMMENDED TREATMENTS BY MENOPAUSE EXPERTS

Vaginal Estradiol

Can improve vaginal dryness, itching, burning and alleviate pain during sex. It works by inserting estrogen directly into the vagina. Even women who are not candidates for traditional HRT may be able to use vaginal Estradiol since it's *local* and *not* systemic.

Vaginal Laser Therapy

Can help increase lubrication and ease dryness that can occur during menopause. The lasers stimulate the production of collagen and elastin, which can help regenerate the tissue lining. It can also help reduce incontinence. Be sure you do your homework here and ask about efficacy as well as pain level. I learned this lesson the hard way when I tried Morpheus8. I would *not* recommend it. My preference is ThermiVa.

Vaginal Moisturizers

Can be used regularly to replenish moisture and relieve dryness. There are glycerin moisturizers like [Replens](#), and Hyaluronic acid-based vaginal suppositories such as [Revaree](#).

Lubrication

Can help with discomfort during intercourse. Not all lubricants are created equal, [here's one](#) we recommend.

Pelvic Floor Strengthening

You can do specific exercises like Kegels to ensure your pelvic floor muscles aren't too relaxed or too tight.

Sex during perimenopause and after menopause is not often talked about, and it can be so difficult on your relationship. Don't be afraid to be proactive with your sexual wellness.

Diet & Exercise

One of the most challenging symptoms many women experience during perimenopause and menopause is weight gain—especially around the tummy area. You'll be bombarded with advice, conflicting do's and don'ts, and maybe even hear your doctor say, "It's just math—exercise more and eat fewer calories." But the reality is far more complicated and nuanced.

While diet and exercise play a significant role in managing menopausal symptoms like weight gain, joint pain, and energy levels, what worked for you *before* may no longer move the needle. Hormonal fluctuations can change the way your body reacts to and tolerates certain foods, making past strategies less effective. Maybe you used to run on the treadmill and see results—now, you might find that your old fitness routine is no longer cutting it.



“ NOW, YOU MIGHT FIND THAT YOUR OLD FITNESS ROUTINE IS NO LONGER CUTTING IT. ”

DIET

Studies show that increasing your daily protein, fiber, and water intake can have profound benefits for menopausal women. But, there are also foods and drinks that can trigger and even *amplify* your menopausal symptoms. Here are a few to be aware of:

- Spicy foods
- Fatty foods
- Caffeine
- High-salt foods
- Processed foods

- Sugar
- Caffeine
- Alcohol
- Fried foods
- White breads, white flour, white rice and pasta

EXERCISE

The most recommended exercises by experts for menopausal women are strength/resistance training and walking. Studies show that as we age, our muscles weaken and atrophy faster. Strength/resistance training helps you maintain muscle mass, balance, and agility, and improve bone density. Some examples are lifting weights, Pilates, using resistance bands, etc. Personally, I love Tracy Anderson's workouts and I have noticed a huge difference in my overall strength and flexibility. I do her online studio workouts for 30 minutes per day, 6 days per week.

Walking is highly encouraged by many doctors and some suggest adding a weighted vest. Even just going about your daily household tasks like laundry or emptying the dishwasher while wearing a weighted vest can vastly improve your balance, endurance, and strength. Your family might laugh at you at first, but you'll get past that! In the beginning, you'll want a weighted vest that is no more than about 10% of your body weight. You can always increase the weight as your strength levels improve.

The *best* exercise program for you is the one you will actually commit to regularly and *enjoy*.

Other FACTORS

Weight gain during perimenopause and menopause isn't just about diet and exercise—other underlying conditions could play a role. Two important factors to discuss with your healthcare provider are hypothyroidism and insulin resistance.

HYPOTHYROIDISM

Hormonal changes during perimenopause can affect the thyroid gland, increasing the likelihood of hypothyroidism. This condition slows down your metabolism, making weight gain more likely.

Common symptoms include:

- Low energy or fatigue
- Difficulty losing weight or unexplained weight gain
- Poor sleep quality
- Hair thinning or hair loss
- Depression, irritability, or mood swings
- Brain fog or trouble concentrating

If you're experiencing these symptoms, a simple blood test can help diagnose thyroid issues, and appropriate treatment can significantly improve your well-being.

INSULIN RESISTANCE

Fluctuating hormones during menopause can also impact how your body processes insulin, potentially leading to insulin resistance. This condition makes it harder for your cells to absorb glucose, causing it to be stored as fat instead.

Insulin resistance can lead to:

- Increased abdominal fat
- Cravings for sugary or carb-heavy foods
- Energy crashes after meals

Addressing insulin resistance often involves a combination of dietary changes, regular exercise, and sometimes medications like Ozempic, Wegovy or Mounjaro, which are part of a class called GLP-1s. These medications can be an effective tool for managing weight under the guidance of a healthcare provider.

Let's talk about the stigma surrounding GLP-1's—there is absolutely no shame in using them to support your weight loss and overall health, as recommended by your doctor. For many, weight struggles are tied to complex factors like hormonal changes and insulin resistance, making it incredibly challenging to lose weight through lifestyle changes alone. These medications aren't a shortcut—they're a legitimate medical solution that can help improve your health, well-being, and confidence. Even a seemingly modest weight loss of 10 pounds can make a big difference in reducing health risks and boosting energy levels. What matters most is finding the *right* tools and support to feel your best, *without* guilt or judgment.

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Putting it ALL Together

Managing weight during perimenopause and menopause isn't as simple as "eating less and exercising more." It requires a thoughtful strategy grounded in understanding your body's unique changes and challenges. Hormonal fluctuations, diet, gut health, thyroid health, insulin resistance, and even lifestyle demands all play a role in how your body responds to diet and exercise. That's why it's essential to focus on approaches tailored to your needs—supported by science and guided by healthcare professionals.

The key is to stop blaming yourself for what once worked but no longer does. Instead, shift your mindset to one of empowerment. With the right tools, a sustainable plan, and a focus on what works for your changing body, you can regain control, feel strong, and embrace this new chapter with confidence!

You are not alone

Menopause is not the end of your vibrant, fulfilling life—it's the beginning of a new chapter where you take charge of your health and well-being. This is your time to learn more about your body, advocate for yourself, and embrace this change with confidence.

Every woman's journey through perimenopause and menopause is unique, and so is your path forward. Whether you're finding the right healthcare provider, exploring treatment options like HRT, or making lifestyle shifts, you have the power to feel like yourself again—maybe *even better* than before.

Most importantly, you are NOT alone. So many women are walking this path alongside you, and together, we can navigate these changes with strength and grace. You *deserve* to feel vibrant, strong, and in control—and with the right knowledge, support, and mindset, you absolutely can!

We love you, and we're cheering you on every step of the way.

You got this!

Quick references & resources

The conversation is changing!
There are so many helpful experts
and resources available now.
These are a few of our favorites,
many of which were used in
compiling this resource.

INSTAGRAM ACCOUNTS

Dr. Mary Claire Haver
[@drmaryclaire](#)



Dr. Heather Hirsch
[@heatherhirschmd](#)



Dr. Rocio Salas
[@drsasalaswhalen](#)



Dr. Vonda Wright
[@drvondawright](#)



Dr. Amy B Killen
[@dr.amykillen](#)



Menopause Taylor
[@menopausetaylor](#)

WEBSITES

[The North American Menopause Society](#)



[The Pause Life](#)



[Heather Hirsch, MD](#)

BOOKS

[The New Menopause: Navigating Your Path Through
Hormonal Change with Purpose, Power, and Facts](#)



[The Menopause Brain](#)



[Unlock Your Menopause Type](#)

BUSBEE STYLE