



Menopause and Heart Health

Heart disease risk rises for everyone as they age, but for women, the years leading up to and after menopause are a critical time to care for their health.

Menopause is a natural phase of life for most women in their 40s or 50s. It's often just called menopause, but **menopause actually has three stages:**



1 PERIMENOPAUSE 2 MENOPAUSE 3 POSTMENOPAUSE

- Includes the most symptomatic years
- **Key time for a woman to reduce CVD risk factors and care for her heart health**
- When a woman's period stops permanently
- 12 months in a row without menstruation
- Many women will spend up to 40% of their lives postmenopausal or "after menopause"
- 1 in 4 women may develop irregular heart rhythms, such as atrial fibrillation (AFIB) after menopause. AFib can put you at higher risk for stroke.

Cardiovascular Risk Factors

Menopause does not cause cardiovascular disease; however, declining levels of estrogen can cause changes and symptoms which impact cardiovascular health including:



- Hot flashes and night sweats
- Depression
- Sleep problems
- Increased body fat around the organs
- Increased cholesterol levels
- Stiffening or weakening of the blood vessels
- Increased risk of metabolic syndrome – 3 or more of:
 - High blood glucose (sugar)
 - Low levels of HDL ("good") cholesterol in the blood
 - High levels of triglycerides in the blood
 - Large waist circumference
 - High blood pressure

The early natural menopause (prior to 45 years of age) or the surgical removal of the ovaries can also increase a woman's risk for cardiovascular disease.

Take Menopause to Heart

Women are at a greater risk for heart disease and stroke after menopause, making it even more important to focus on your health before menopause, and throughout the menopausal transition.

- Get plenty of exercise/ physical activity**
- Manage your stress**
- Know your numbers**
 - Blood pressure
 - Body Mass Index (BMI)
 - Cholesterol
 - Blood glucose (blood sugar)
- Eat healthy**
- Quit smoking**
- Get plenty of sleep**



Talk to your health care team about your risk factors and how to prevent cardiovascular disease during middle age.
To learn more, visit goredforwomen.org/menopause.