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**
   - Includes the most symptomatic years
   - Key time for a woman to reduce CVD risk factors and care for her heart health

2. **MENOPAUSE**
   - When a woman’s period stops permanently
   - 12 months in a row without menstruation

3. **POSTMENOPAUSE**
   - Many women will spend up to 40% of their lives postmenopausal or “after menopause”

**Cardiovascular Risk Factors**

Menopause does not cause cardiovascular disease; however, during the menopausal transition, women experience many changes in their bodies, including some that can impact their cardiovascular health:

- Decline in estrogen levels
- 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) and 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
- Quit smoking
- Eat healthy
- Manage your stress
- Know your numbers
  - Blood pressure
  - Body Mass Index (BMI)
  - Cholesterol
  - Blood glucose (blood sugar)

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