

Fox Valley Reproductive Medicine (FVRM) is an independently physician-owned organization.

Menopause/Perimenopause (early) – A natural event in every woman's life.

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A woman enters her reproductive "life" at the onset of the first menses or about twelve years of age. Usually, female fertility peaks in the late teens or early twenties and most women experience a decline in fertility in their thirties. Menopause is a natural event in the aging process and signifies the end of the reproductive years with cessation of cyclic ovarian function as manifested by cyclic menstruation. The hormonal markers of menopause include:

- A low estrogen level, which has consequences on many organ systems apart from the reproductive system
- High Follicle Stimulating Hormone (FSH) & Luteinizing Hormone (LH)
- Low testosterone level

Perimenopause represents the transition period from the childbearing years to menopause, which may last from several months to several years. Menopause is defined as the final ending of menses. The average age of menopause is 51 and less than 1% of women experience it before the age of 40. Some women undergo premature menopause at a very early age affecting their ability to have children.

Causes of Menopause

- Physiological (a normal part of every woman's reproductive life)
- Surgical (a result of removal of the ovaries)
- Chemotherapy or high dose radiotherapy related to cancer treatment
- Premature (may be an immune process)

Symptoms of Menopause

- Hot flashes
- Vaginal dryness
- Irritability and mood swings
- Loss of libido (sex drive)
- Depression, anxiety
- Fatigue and inability to concentrate
- Headaches
- Loss of skin elasticity with reduction in breast size

Menopause is a normal part of a female's life and, with expert management; she should experience an excellent quality of life. Of course, this is a time of intimate change, and change is always associated with anxiety and trepidation. The following are not necessarily true about the menopausal years and the reader should be reassured that:

- Weight gain is not inevitable.
- Hormone replacement therapy is not deleterious when administered properly.
- Sexual enjoyment and gratification may continue for many years.
- Hysterectomy is not an automatic consequence of menopause.



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With a proactive approach, including a strong emphasis on preventative care and the use of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) in appropriate cases, the menopausal years may indeed be the golden years of a woman's life.

Call FVRM at 920-560-5585 or your personal primary care physician with questions or for the most appropriate treatment option for your situation.