

# Menopause: definitions and terms

The menopause, or the cessation of menstruation, is a stage of the life cycle which will occur in all women. The average age at menopause is 51 years.

## Types of menopause

- **Natural menopause** is recognized to have occurred after a woman has had 12 consecutive months without periods (amenorrhea) due to loss of ovarian follicular activity for which no other obvious pathological or physiological cause is present.
- **Induced menopause** is defined as amenorrhea which follows either surgical removal of both ovaries (with or without hysterectomy) or iatrogenic ablation of ovarian function (e.g. by chemotherapy or radiation).
- **Premature** and **early menopause** are terms to describe menopause occurring much earlier than the average age of 51 years. Menopause before the age of 40 is commonly referred to as premature menopause. Menopause that occurs between 40 and 45 years is termed early menopause.
- **Primary ovarian insufficiency (POI)** is currently considered to be a better term than premature menopause to denote the loss of ovarian function, as it does not specify definitive failure.

## Stages of menopause

- **Premenopause** encompasses the entire reproductive period from menarche to the final menstrual period.
- **Perimenopause** begins with the first features of the approaching natural menopause, including hot flushes and menstrual irregularity, and ends 12 months after the last menstrual period.
- **Menopausal transition** is the period of time before the final menstrual period, when variability in the menstrual cycle usually is increased.
- **Postmenopause** starts from the final menstrual period regardless of whether the menopause was induced or spontaneous.
- **Climacteric** is the phase encompassing the transition from the reproductive state to the non-reproductive state. This phase extends for a variable period both before and after the perimenopause.

Worldwide, the total female population is 3.89 billion and for women the average life expectancy at birth is 76 years. Life expectancies vary around the world.

## Further information

**EMAS CareOnline 2020** <https://emas-online.org/emas-careonline>

**The essential menopause curriculum for healthcare professionals: A European Menopause and Andropause Society (EMAS) position statement (2022)** <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.maturitas.2021.12.001>

**Global consensus recommendations on menopause in the workplace: a European Menopause and Andropause Society (EMAS) position statement (2021)** <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.maturitas.2021.06.006>