



# Women's Health & Menopause

## Session Two

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# Menopause & Your Health

During our first session on menopause, we focused on what menopause is and its treatment. Menopause is:

- Menopause is the time in a woman's life that marks the end of your periods (menstrual cycles) and you can no longer become pregnant.
  - It is sometimes called *'the change of life'*
- It is a natural biological process which can happen in your 40s or 50.
- Menopause is diagnosed after you have gone 12 months without a period (menstrual cycle).

With menopause and post-menopause, a woman's health risk can also change, including an increased risk for health-related conditions.

In this second session we will look at how menopause may affect your health, including:

- Heart disease
- Cholesterol
- Stroke
- Osteoporosis
- Diabetes
- Breast/Cervical/Ovarian Cancer



# Heart Disease, Cholesterol, and Stroke

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## HEART DISEASE

Menopause does not cause heart disease, but several risk factors associated with menopause, which can put you at an increased risk of heart disease, including:

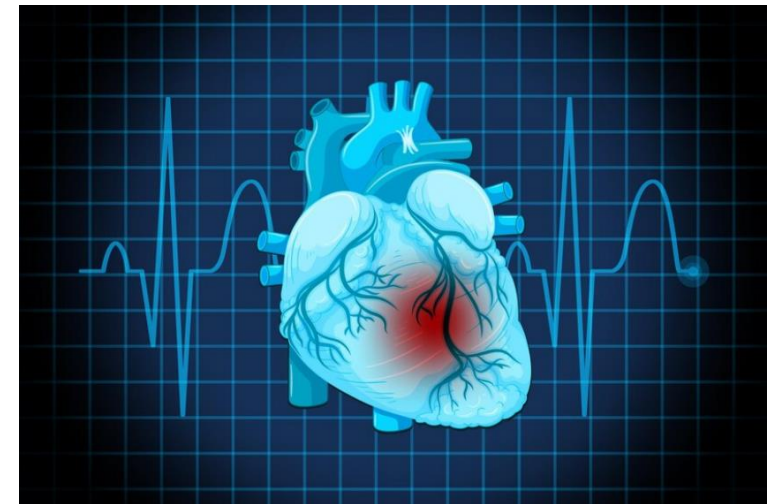
- Your age at the time of menopause
  - If you start menopause before the age 45 are at higher risk for heart disease.
- Your cause and timing of menopause
  - If you have surgery, at an early age, to remove your ovaries can lead to a higher risk of heart disease.
- Estrogen (sex hormone)
  - Estrogen helps keep blood vessels relaxed and open.
  - Less estrogen may cause cholesterol to build up on artery walls increasing the risk of heart disease and stroke.
- You have hot flashes and night sweats
  - Hot flashes and night symptoms can last up to 10 years and are associated with worse heart disease risk factors.

# Heart Disease, Cholesterol, and Stroke

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## HEART DISEASE

- You have depression and sleep problems.
  - Some studies show a link between heart disease and depression/sleep problems.
- You have increased body fat around organs (visceral fat).
  - Increased body fat in the abdomen near your vital organs is associated with heart disease.
- You may have high cholesterol levels and/or metabolic syndrome.
  - Metabolic syndrome is diagnosed when a person has three or more of these individual risk factors:
    - Abdominal obesity
    - High triglycerides
    - Low HDL cholesterol (good cholesterol)
    - High blood pressure
    - High blood sugar



# Heart Disease, Cholesterol, and Stroke

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



Know your numbers



Eat healthy



Manage your stress

- Blood pressure
- Body Mass Index (BMI)
- Cholesterol
- Blood glucose (blood sugar)

(American Heart Association)

# Heart Disease, Cholesterol, and Stroke

## CHOLESTEROL

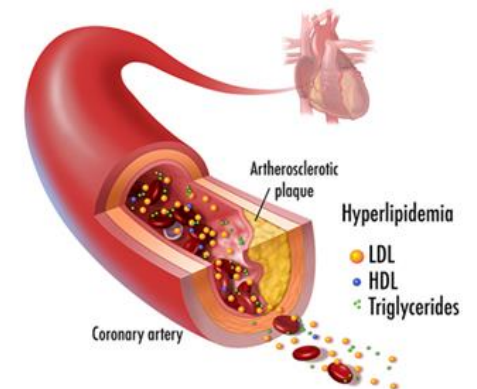
The increased risk of heart disease is mostly due to menopause's effect on cholesterol (lipid) levels.

Estrogen (the sex hormone) which decreases during menopause has many heart protective mechanisms:

- It works in the liver to regulate your lipid (fat) absorption and maintains healthy cholesterol levels.
- With menopause your body's ability to maintain healthy lipid (fat) levels is affected causing an increase in cholesterol in your blood.

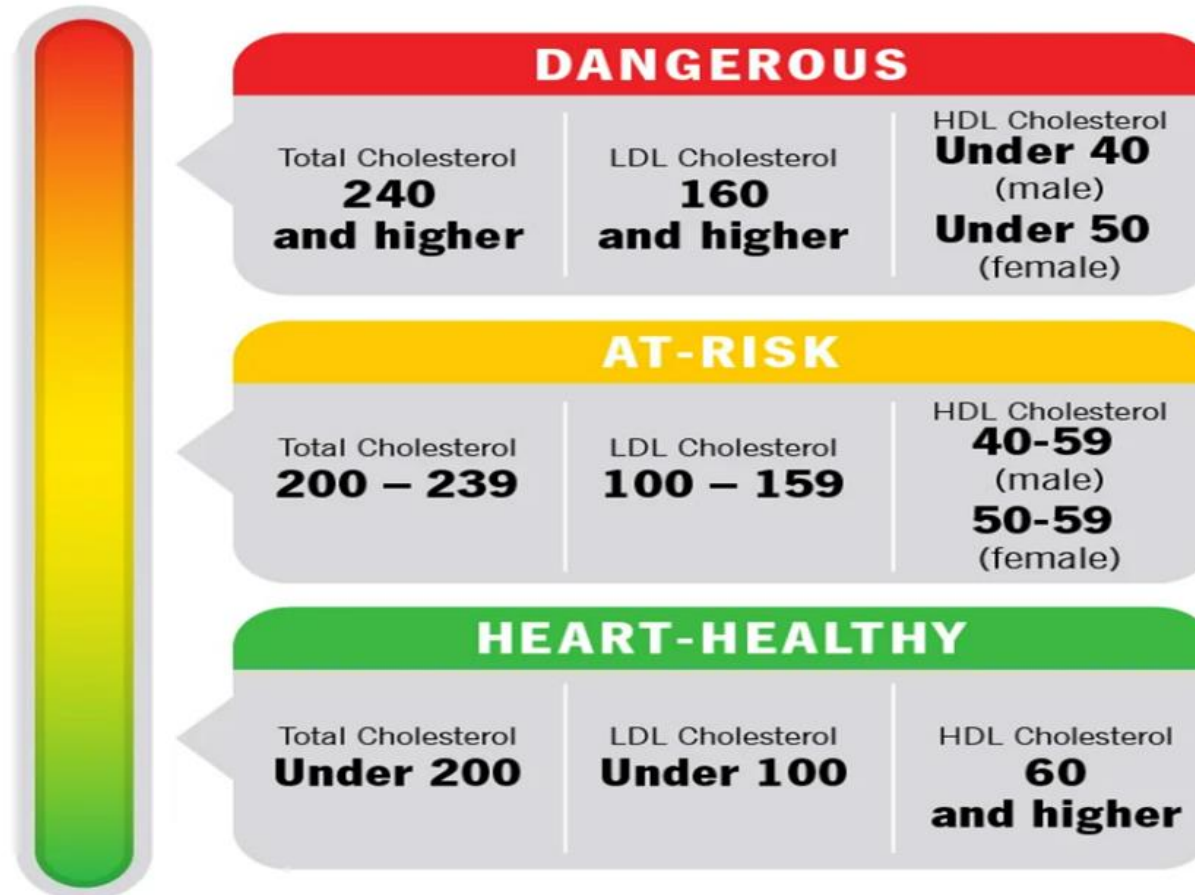
To check your cholesterol your doctor may order a lipid profile, which is a panel of blood tests, to measure the types of fats in your blood.

- A lipid profile (panel) will include:
  - Your total Cholesterol
  - Your high-density lipoprotein (**HDL**)—the **GOOD** cholesterol
  - Your low-density lipoprotein (**LDL**)—the **BAD** cholesterol
  - Your Triglycerides



# Heart Disease, Cholesterol, and Stroke

## Cholesterol Levels



(Cleveland Clinic)



# Heart Disease, Cholesterol, and Stroke

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## STROKE

**Women have a lower risk of stroke during middle age than men, but during menopause is when many women develop cardiac (heart) risk factors, including stroke.**

- If a woman experiences menopause early, this could mean she could be at an increased risk of stroke by blocked blood vessels.
  - Women whose menopause occurred before age 40 have a higher risk of ischemic stroke (blood clot), causing poor blood supply to the heart, than women who experienced it between ages 50-54.
    - The risk of ischemic stroke decreases with an increase in a woman's age at menopause.

# Heart Disease, Cholesterol, and Stroke

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## STROKE

A stroke is an emergency, and treatments work best when a stroke is recognized and diagnosed within 3 hours of the first symptom.

- Signs of a stroke include:
  - You have sudden numbness or weakness in the face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body.
  - You have sudden confusion, trouble speaking, or difficulty understanding speech.
  - You have sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
  - You have sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance, or lack of coordination.
  - You have a sudden severe headache with no known cause.
    - **Call 9-1-1 right away if you or someone else has any of these symptoms.**
    - Remember to act **F.A.S.T.:**
      - **F**ace droops
      - **A**rm weakness
      - **S**peech difficulty
      - **T**ime is critical


# Heart Disease, Cholesterol, and Stroke

## STROKE




**Is it a stroke?**


**Act F.A.S.T.**




**FACE**  
droops



**ARM**  
weakness



**SPEECH**  
difficulty



**TIME**  
is critical.

# Osteoporosis

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**Osteoporosis (porous bone) is a disease that weakens bones and increases the risk of a sudden and unexpected broken bone (fracture).**

- Loss of bone is silent (asymptomatic)
- With Osteoporosis, or osteopenia (the less severe form of bone loss) even the most benign fall is a risk for fracture

## **Osteoporosis risk factors:**

- You are over 65
- You had your first period come early or early menopause
- You smoke and who drink excessively
- You who have undergone bariatric surgery
- You have kidney failure
- You are taking long-term oral corticosteroids (for example: prednisone)

## **Osteoporosis risk factors continued:**

- You take certain medications which limit the body's ability to absorb Vitamin-D
- You have a low Body Mass Index (BMI)
- You are of white, Indian, and Asian ancestry.

## **Tips to help you prevent osteoporosis:**

- Exercise regularly
- Eat foods to help prevent osteoporosis
- Take supplements
- Avoid smoking
- Limit alcohol consumption
- Limit your caffeine intake

# Diabetes

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**Menopause has not been found to raise the risk of diabetes, but it can affect how your body uses blood sugar.**

Because of the following changes menopause may increase the risk of developing type 2 diabetes:

- Hormonal changes
- Blood sugar fluctuations
- Weight gain
- Disturbed sleep
- Depression

Menopause causes decreases in estrogen levels in your body leading to various changes that can affect your body weight, fat distribution, and insulin sensitivity, can:

- Raise your risk of developing type 2 diabetes
- If you have diabetes, it can make managing your diabetes more challenging.
  - Talk with your doctor about your insulin or medications as during menopause they may need to be adjusted.

# Diabetes

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**There are many ways to reduce your risk of diabetes and the risk of diabetes complications if you:**

- Do weight-bearing exercise.
- Exercise more in general.
- Eat a healthy diet that limits sugar and fat.
- Control your weight.
- Limit your alcohol intake.
- Increase sources of omega-3 fatty acids in your diet with fatty fish (such as mackerel, salmon, sardines) or plant-based sources (such as soy, canola oil, flax seeds, and walnuts).
- For women with osteoporosis, use of bisphosphonate medication may cut the need for insulin.



# Breast, Cervical, and Ovarian Cancer

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## BREAST CANCER

Menopause itself is not associated with an increased risk of developing cancer. However, some rates of cancer do increase with age, including Breast Cancer, Cervical Cancer, and Ovarian Cancer.

### Breast Cancer

- Your risk of developing breast cancer increases with age.
- Some drugs used to manage your menopause symptoms may increase OR decrease your cancer risk.
- Your risk of developing breast cancer is greater if you have a mother, sister, or daughter who has had breast cancer.
- Other risk factors include:
  - You have cancer in one breast (may recur or develop in other)
  - You have a history of ovarian, uterine, or colon cancer
  - You have a genetic abnormality such as a BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene mutation
  - You started menopause late (after age 55)
  - You started your periods (menses) early in life (before age 12)
  - You had your first child after age 30
  - You never had any children
  - You are overweight or obese after menopause

# Breast, Cervical, and Ovarian Cancer

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## CERVICAL CANCER

- Cervical cancer most often occurs in women over the age of 30.
- The main cause of cervical cancer is associated with long-lasting infections with certain types of human papillomavirus (HPV).
- Reduce your risk of developing cervical cancers by working with your physician to schedule screening test and receive HPV vaccine to protect against HPV infections.
- See your doctor if you have symptoms that might be caused by cervical cancer, including:
  - You have bleeding after intercourse, between periods or after menopause.
  - If you still are having a period (menses) where the bleeding is heavier and lasts longer.
  - You are having watery, bloody, vaginal discharge that may be heavy and have a foul smell.
  - You have pain during sex or in the pelvic region of your stomach.



# Breast, Cervical, and Ovarian Cancer

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## OVARIAN CANCER

Menopause doesn't cause ovarian cancer, but your chances go up as you get older.

- When you go through menopause, your risk increases because of your age.
- Approximately half of ovarian cancers are found in women ages 63 or older.

You may be at risk of developing ovarian cancer, if:

- You started menopause late, usually after the age of 52.
- You take hormone therapy to help with manage menopause symptoms.
- You are overweight (obese).
- You have a family history of ovarian cancer.
- You smoke.

Make an appointment to see your doctor if you have:

- You are having vaginal bleeding (particularly if you are past menopause) or a discharge from your vagina that is not normal for you.
- You have pain or pressure in the pelvic area.
- You have abdominal or back pain.
- You are having bloating.
- You have a feeling full too quickly, or difficulty eating.
- You have a change in your bathroom habits, such as more frequent or urgent need to urinate and/or constipation.

# Prevention and Screening

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**As with all health concerns partner with your doctor for care and management of your health, including:**

- Have an annual physical/well woman health exam.
- Be sure to complete any preventative health service your doctor may suggest, including:
  - Bone density screenings
  - Breast cancer mammography screenings
  - Cervical cancer screening/pap test
  - Cervical infections screenings for sexually transmitted disease (STD) including Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, HIV, HPV screenings
  - Diabetes screening
  - Tobacco use screening and intervention
  - Domestic and interpersonal violence screening and counseling

# Prevention and Screening

Lifestyle changes can help you manage your overall health during menopause and throughout your life.

Eight (8) strategies to live a healthy lifestyle:

- Diet
- Exercise
- Stop Smoking
- Sleep
- Weight
- Watch your Cholesterol
- Manage Blood Sugar
- Maintain Healthy Blood Pressure



(American Heart Association)

# Pa Health Wellness Resources

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**To learn more about PHW's Disease Management programs visit:**

- **Visit PA Health & Wellness website:** <https://www.pahealthwellness.com/>
- **Call Participant Services:** 1-844-626-6813 (TTY:711)
- **Email:** [phwcasemanagement@pahealthwellness.com](mailto:phwcasemanagement@pahealthwellness.com)

# Women's Health Resources

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For more information on menopause:

## Office on Women's Health

- Department of Health and Human Services
- 800-994-9662
- Weblink: <https://www.womenshealth.gov/>

## American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

- 800-673-8444
- [resources@acog.org](mailto:resources@acog.org)
- Weblink: <https://www.acog.org/>

## North American Menopause Society

- 440-442-7550
- [info@menopause.org](mailto:info@menopause.org)
- Weblink: <https://www.menopause.org/>

For more information on aging or health for seniors visit:

## National Institute on Aging

- Weblink: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/>

## Administration on Aging

- Weblink: <https://acl.gov/>

## National Council on Aging

- Weblink: <https://www.ncoa.org/>

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