



# 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**
  - 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)

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](http://goredforwomen.org/menopause)**