

LESSON 3

MENOPAUSE

- **MENOPAUSE MARKS THE END OF MENSTRUATION AND FERTILITY FOR WOMEN. IT IS A NATURAL BIOLOGICAL PROCESS, AND MORE THAN 70% OF ALL WOMEN SUFFER FROM SYMPTOMS RELATED TO MENOPAUSE FOR YEARS. IN THIS LESSON, WE ARE GOING TO INTRODUCE HOW THESE SYMPTOMS AFFECT WOMEN BOTH PHYSICALLY AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY, AND EXPLAIN WHAT TREATMENTS OR LIFESTYLE CHANGES SHOULD BE PRACTICED TO EASE THE DISCOMFORT.**

Before You Read

Please read the following passage with your group members and discuss what statements may not be true.

Usually, the age for menopause ranges from forty-five to fifty-five; therefore, a 35-year-old woman who has been having irregular periods for more than one year should not be diagnosed with menopause; other causes of irregular menstruation should be investigated. On the other hand, when a woman has been experiencing irregular periods for 7 months, it indicates that she is menopausal. In this case a treatment should be administered. That is HRT (hormone replacement treatment), which is widely used in hospitals for menopause today. Generally, entering menopause means that a woman is getting old. Within or after menopause, skin changes and weight gain make most women feel unattractive. Therefore, women need to be aware of the treatment to relieve the symptoms. If they don't, the symptoms and uncomfortable feelings may last for decades. By the way, men can also experience menopause.

True or False?

How much do you know about menopause? Read the following statements, and write **T** if you think the statement is true, and **F** if you think it is false. Discuss your answers with a partner.

- _____ 1. If you haven't had a period in several months, you can go off the pill because you have entered menopause.
- _____ 2. There is a cure for menopause.
- _____ 3. Men also experience menopause symptoms.
- _____ 4. If you are under the age of forty-five, you are too young to be menopausal.
- _____ 5. The menopausal transition and symptoms can last for a decade or more.
- _____ 6. Women may feel even sexier and more confident after menopause.

Dialog

Read the conversation and try to infer the meaning of the underlined words.

G: gynecologist, **P:** patient

P: My period often comes twice a month, and it even continued for the whole month last time. I really feel tired from these relentless menstruation cycles that never seem to stop!

G: How long has this been going on?

P: It started about three months ago.

G: What other symptoms do you have besides irregular periods?

P: I have trouble sleeping at night. I keep perspiring, and it really disturbs my sleep.

G: You are experiencing menopause. Your insomnia is a result of the night sweats and hot flashes or flushes which are the two common symptoms of menopause. You might also have heart palpitations.

P: Yes, I can feel my heart racing or beating irregularly from time to time, and it is frequently accompanied by hot flashes. All the symptoms make me so uncomfortable, and I can hardly control my temper.

G: Pay attention to your blood pressure. Hypertension can cause headaches, heart palpitations and excessive sweating. Maintaining your blood pressure within a proper range can alleviate many of your discomforts and reduce your irritability.

P: Okay. I see. So my irregular periods are also a common symptom of menopause?

G: Yes, they are. This will last for about twelve months before you really hit menopause. Before that, your reproductive hormones, such as estrogen and progesterone, will go up and down erratically, making your periods hard to predict. Some other symptoms you might have include vaginal dryness, frequent urinary infections, and reduced skin elasticity. All of these are associated with your fluctuating hormone levels.

P: Does it mean I can stop taking the pill?

G: No, you still have a risk of getting pregnant. Your ovaries are still producing eggs, just less than they did before. If you have any questions about this, you can ask an obstetrician for more details.

Exercise

Fill in the blanks below with the words from the conversation for which you have inferred the meanings.

menstruation period perspire insomnia hot flash or flush vaginal
relentless heart palpitations obstetrician erratic reproductive
estrogen progesterone ovaries irritability

1. _____ sudden brief sensation of heat; a symptom associated with menopause
2. _____ one type of female sex hormone that is secreted by the ovaries and responsible for typical female sexual characteristics
3. _____ the movements of your heart when it beats faster than usual
4. _____ sweat; to pass liquid through the skin
5. _____ irregular
6. _____ the process of a woman losing blood from her womb every month
7. _____ one type of female sex hormone produced in the ovaries which prepares and maintains the uterus for pregnancy
8. _____ related to the part of a woman's body that connects her outer sex organ to her womb
9. _____ a doctor with special training in how to care for pregnant women and help with births
10. _____ a tendency to easily get angry
11. _____ the time about once a month when a woman who is not pregnant menstruates
12. _____ relating to producing new life or offspring
13. _____ continuing without ending
14. _____ the two organs in a woman's body which produce eggs (ova) and secrete female sex hormones
15. _____ an inability to sleep

Vocabulary

ESP Vocabulary

This vocabulary is commonly used in the field of health and medical care.

menstruation	<i>n</i>	the process every month of losing blood from the womb
period	<i>n</i>	the time about once a month when a woman who is not pregnant menstruates
insomnia	<i>n</i>	a medical condition in which you have difficulty sleeping
hot flash/flush	<i>n phr</i>	the uncomfortable feeling of suddenly being hot, experienced by some women during menopause
vaginal	<i>adj</i>	to do with one of a woman's sex organs, consisting of a tube that connects the outer sex organs to the womb
heart palpitations	<i>n phr</i>	when your heart beats too quickly or not regularly
gynecologist	<i>n</i>	a doctor who studies and treats medical conditions and diseases that affect women and their reproductive organs (Note: An obstetrician is a doctor whose job is to check the health of pregnant women and help with the birth of their children.)
reproductive	<i>adj</i>	relating to the process of having babies
estrogen	<i>n</i>	a hormone produced in a woman's ovaries that makes her develop typical female sexual features and prepares her body for having a baby
progesterone	<i>n</i>	a hormone produced in the bodies of women and female animals
ovary	<i>n</i>	one of the two organs in the body of a woman that produce eggs and the reproductive hormones. Eggs travel from the ovaries down to the uterus. If the eggs are fertilized, an embryo will develop. (plural: ovaries)

General Vocabulary

This vocabulary is used for general purposes.

perspire	<i>v</i>	to produce liquid on your skin as a result of being hot
relentless	<i>adj</i>	something harsh that seems to never stop or improve
erratic	<i>adj</i>	changing often or not following a regular pattern so that it is difficult to know what will happen next
irritability	<i>n</i>	an angry or disagreeable mood, easily angered

Reading

Menopause Care

I am a forty-nine-year-old woman. Recently, my **menstruation** has become irregular. Sometimes, the time between my **periods** was more than forty days. Moreover, I have spent all night tossing and turning because I could not fall asleep and kept **perspiring**. Due to **insomnia**, I started to have dark circles and felt extremely sleepy when I was at

5 work. Starting this week, I have also felt **hot flashes** from head to toe during the night, and it has been more difficult for me to fall asleep. These symptoms have adversely influenced my body image, mood and life.

Furthermore, I began to notice that my memory has become poorer. For instance, I intended to buy salmon for dinner one Saturday morning. However, after doing the

10 laundry and watching one episode of my favorite Korean soap opera, I forgot what I wanted to buy. I had to think very hard to remember my plans. Also, I have had quarrels with my husband more and more often because of my mood swings and irritability. In addition, I had **vaginal** dryness and irritation that had a negative impact on my sex life. One night, after I had an intense argument with my husband, I cried for a long time.

15 Even worse, I actually fainted while riding a scooter. My heart was beating **relentlessly** and racing for no reason, and then the **heart palpitations** were accompanied by hot flashes. Just when I intended to turn right, I lost consciousness for a second or two, fell off the scooter, and had to go to hospital. After seeing a doctor, I was told that all these problems could be symptoms of menopause. Consequently, I made an appointment with

20 a **gynecologist** for a detailed examination and checkup.

One week later, I visited the gynecologist again to see the results. The doctor told me that the menstrual irregularities were due to the **erratic** levels of my **reproductive** hormones, including **estrogen** and **progesterone**, and because my **ovaries** had been producing less and less ova, my menstruation would eventually stop. Furthermore, I had a slight case

25 of osteoporosis. According to the laboratory data and my symptoms, the diagnosis of menopause was confirmed. At first, I was shocked because it seemed to mean that I was really old. In addition, many of my friends who are experiencing menopause complain that their skin has become loose and rough. I told the doctor my concerns, and she prescribed some hormone supplements. Moreover, she suggested several ways to alleviate

30 my discomfort. For example, to exercise more often to release stress and avoid **irritability**.

The doctor gave me some other complementary and alternative treatments to manage the symptoms of menopause. To alleviate one of my major symptoms—hot flashes, I now take vitamin E supplements, and have tried to stay away from things like hot beverages,

spicy foods, alcohol, hot weather and even warm rooms. Also, I do yoga and meditate
35 almost every day, and have aerobic exercise three times a week. I feel that my moods are steadier after the physical training and medication. Also, I tell my husband and children that I am suffering from the symptoms of menopause and ask them not to take my words too seriously and to be more patient if I get upset at trivial things. I also promised my family that I will try to control my irritability.

40 Having a good diet plan is also an important way to deal with menopause. I try to eat more foods that are rich in calcium and magnesium, such as bean curd, legumes, nuts, and dark green vegetables to prevent the process of osteoporosis. In addition, I consume anti-oxidant foods, such as oranges, guavas, beans, whole grain bread, and nuts, to prevent getting cardiovascular diseases, which the doctor said are more common in
45 women of my age.

I am now feeling much better than I did last month. I plan to start a support group next week so that I can gather all my menopausal friends and neighbors. We can exchange useful information, do some relaxing, and have enjoyable activities together, and even share our experiences with women who have not yet entered menopause. In this way,
50 women in menopause will not face this change in their lives alone.

After You Read

Fill in the charts according to the information that you read in the article.

1. What symptoms did the menopausal woman in the story have? *List them all. Two have been done for you.*

Symptoms	Symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ night perspiration (night sweats) ◆ hot flushes/flushes 	

2. How did the doctor suggest dealing with symptoms? *List all the ways. One has been done for you.*

Doctor's Advice	Corresponding Symptom
1. take vitamin E supplements daily	1. hot flushes/flushes

Language Focus

Corpus Application (TIME)

In Lesson 1 we learned about **TIME**. In this lesson, we are going to apply this online corpus to look for more collocations.

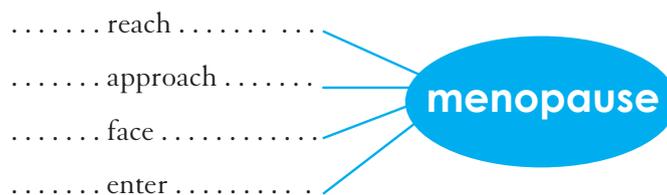
In this lesson, the key word is **menopause**, so first look for the words that collocate with this in the text.

“..... symptoms of menopause” (Paragraph 1)

“.....experiencing menopause” (Paragraph 3)

We can follow the steps in Lesson 1 to search for the verbs that frequently co-occur with **menopause**. Select **verb.ALL** from **POS LIST**. Then, key in the node word **MENOPAUSE** and hit **SEARCH**. Remember to check the concordance lines to ensure the collocations show **verb + menopause**. For example, one of the results is **relieves menopause**. However, while checking the concordance line, the complete collocation is **relieves menopause symptoms**. Therefore, the verb **relieve** actually collocates with **menopause symptoms** not just **menopause**. Now let's check the results and their concordance lines. Select the target collocation-**V + menopause**.

The results are as follows:



Some examples of these collocations are listed below:

- Hormone-replacement therapy is a treatment for women **facing menopause**.
- The new medicine may be appropriate for women who have not **entered menopause** yet.
- When women **reach menopause**, the loss of estrogen accelerates the deterioration of bone mass.

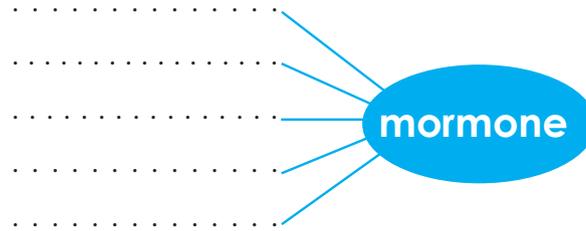
Please note that this corpus system is constantly being updated, and the page or data may have some changes when you access it.

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LESSON 3: MENOPAUSE

Exercise

Now practice using **TIME**. Please find the collocations of **verb + hormone**.



Now, make sentences by using the collocations found in the corpus. It may be helpful to look through the concordance lines.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Tasks

I Assessment Skills for Menopause

In order to know whether a woman is experiencing menopause, we can use an assessment scale. This scale is used by women at home for self-assessment, as well as in hospitals as part of the medical staff's initial inquiry.

Therefore, in this section, the language of the assessment scale is introduced. The categories assessed are listed below.

	None (0)	Mild (1)	Moderate (2)	Severe (3)
1. Irregular periods				
2. Palpitations				
3. Hot flashes/flushes				
4. Night sweats				
5. Weight gain				
6. Vaginal dryness				
7. Vaginal irritation				
8. Headaches				
9. Fatigue				
10. Loss of muscle tone				
11. Joint pain				
12. Constipation				
13. Dental diseases				
14. Thinner skin and hair				
15. Stress incontinence: unable to control the bladder due to stress				
16. Insomnia				
17. Depression				
18. Anxiety				
19. Mood swings				
20. Poor memory				
21. Lack of desire to engage in sexual activities				

After assessing a woman, the final score can be calculated. If the score is over fifteen, it indicates that the woman's estrogen is insufficient and she may be experiencing menopause. She should thus make an appointment with the physician and undergo a more detailed evaluation.

II Group work

Period pain, also known as dysmenorrhoea or menstrual pain, is caused by contractions of the uterus or womb, similar to those that women have during labor.

Part 1 What is period pain?

1. Do you or your female friends have menstrual pain? Describe how you feel and how long the pain lasts.
2. What measures do you or your female friends take to control the pain? Share your experiences.
3. For some women, other symptoms besides pain occur during a period. Look at the following chart. Work in pairs. Check if you have the following symptoms during your period. (If you are male, you can interview a female friend or family member for their symptoms.)

Symptoms	Have you experienced this?
Headache	
Tiredness	
Faintness	
Breast tenderness	
Feeling sick	
Feeling emotional or tearful	
Diarrhea	

Part 2 Does a man experience male menopause?

Female menopause is mentioned in the article. Do you know that men also experience an andropause (a better way of saying “male menopause”)? Some doctors refer to this problem as androgen decline or **low testosterone**. Men experience a decline in the production of the male hormone testosterone with aging, but this also occurs with some diseases, such as **diabetes**. Along with the decline in testosterone, some men experience symptoms such as fatigue, **weakness**, **depression** and **sexual problems**. However, the link between these symptoms and decreased levels of testosterone is still controversial.

Now, do some research online and find out the causes, symptoms and treatments of male and female menopause. Write your answers in the chart below.

	Female menopause	Male andropause
Causes		
Symptoms		
Treatments		