

What we can do for you?

- Our gynaecologist will take a detailed history of your symptoms
- A breast and pelvic examination will be performed if necessary
- Blood pressure and Body Mass Index (BMI) measurements will be taken
- Blood tests if appropriate will be ordered
- Referrals for mammograms/bone density test will be made if necessary
- Lifestyle advice can be given
- Hormone replacement if necessary will be prescribed
- Cost €120 including all tests

What is Menopause?

Menopause refers to a natural stop to your menstrual periods and fertility. Menopause happens because your ovaries stop producing the hormones oestrogen and progesterone. The usual age at which women experience this is between 40 to 55 years old. Currently the average age when it happens is between 50 and 51 years old. It is usually accepted that you have reached menopause when you have not had a menstrual period for 12 months.

Symptoms and Signs

These can start some time prior to your periods stopping permanently, or they can start only when your periods finish. If you are symptomatic whilst still having menstrual cycles, this is termed the perimenopause. The symptoms vary enormously in severity and frequency. Some of the common symptoms include:

- Changes in the pattern of your cycle e.g. periods heavier, lighter, further apart or closer together
- Hot flushes
- Night sweats
- Mood swings
- Vaginal dryness
- Thinning of hair

What can I do?

There are several things that you can do yourself when you reach the menopause

- Dietary changes

Avoidance of certain foods and drinks – caffeine, tea, alcohol and spicy foods - which are known to trigger hot flushes may lessen the severity and frequency of hot flushes.

- Exercise

Exercise for the menopausal woman is very important for lots of reasons. It helps you to sleep better, aids weight loss, combats stress and tension and generally improves the quality of life of women at this potentially difficult time. Fast walking or cardiovascular exercise tailored to your specific abilities is the most suitable form of exercise. More gentle forms of exercise such as yoga which teach controlled breathing techniques can be very useful in coping with such symptoms as flushes and sweats.

- Complementary therapies

There is very little scientific evidence that complementary therapies are effective in relieving menopausal symptoms. There are ongoing studies to look at various naturally occurring substances such as red clover, black cohosh, soy and dong quai to see if they have some role to play in the relief of such symptoms as hot flushes. Their safety is yet undetermined and therefore cannot be recommended for patients on certain medications or with a history of breast cancer. However, some women do report an improvement in their vasomotor symptoms i.e. flushes and sweats with these compounds and they may be worth trying on a short term basis.

- HRT – yes or no?

The advantages and disadvantages of hormone replacement therapy have been debated for decades. There is undoubtedly a role for them in some select patients, but the idea that they are suitable for all and to be recommended for all women is long gone. Large studies have revealed that HRT usage for more than 3-5 years increases the risk of breast cancer, albeit by a very small amount. We also know now that HRT should not be used as a preventative measure against heart disease as was previously suggested. There is a role for HRT to play in the management of menopausal women and this is in the short term control of menopausal symptoms. HRT relieves symptoms very successfully, and for women whose quality of life is being sufficiently affected by their symptoms it is very useful, providing the patient fits the criteria required to take HRT safely. For prevention of bone loss and the treatment of established osteoporosis there are other more successful non-hormonal treatments. The general rule when using HRT is as follows:

“Use as little as possible for the shortest time possible”

- Types of HRT

Depending on your situation different types or regimens of HRT are recommended.

1. Women who are still having periods or who have had a period in the last 12 months require a combination of oestrogen for 28 days and progestogen for 14 days which allows them to have a monthly bleed.

2. Women who have not had a period for one year or more require a combination of both oestrogen and progesterone daily for 28 days in a lower dosage which allows them to be bleed-free.
3. Women who have had a hysterectomy require only oestrogen as their HRT.