

# Menopause and Bone Health

## Protecting Bone Health

Bone health is an important part of your general health. When the structure of bone becomes weaker and less dense there is an increased risk of breaking. This is osteoporosis. It can lead to a higher risk of a bone breaking from a minor incident (such as a bump, fall or trip). Early diagnosis and management of osteoporosis can help protect bone health and reduce the risk of breaking a bone.

## About Menopause

Women can experience a range of symptoms due to menopause. This usually relates to a decrease in oestrogen levels. The medical definition of menopause is when you have not had a menstrual period for 12 consecutive months and perimenopause is the transition time leading to menopause.

Symptoms can include – change in menstrual periods, hot flushes, night sweats, problems sleeping, joint pain, tiredness, anxiety or mood changes, bladder symptoms and vaginal dryness.

The severity or type of symptom can vary greatly between individuals and it is recommended women experiencing symptoms discuss them with their doctor. 80% of women will experience some symptoms and approx 25% of women will have moderate to severe symptoms that will impact their quality of life.

Menopausal hormone therapy (MHT) is an evidence-based, first line treatment option for women with symptoms. These therapies are available as tablets, patches, gels or vaginal treatments. The type of MHT treatment depends on age, if the woman has had a hysterectomy and other health conditions.

Options should be discussed with your doctor. Examples include: oestrogen plus progestogen, oestrogen alone for women who have had a hysterectomy, tibolone (single tablet combining some oestrogen, progesterone and testosterone effect), vaginal oestrogen therapy.

## Hormone levels and bone health

Oestrogen plays an important role in maintaining bone strength. So changes in hormone levels around the time of menopause can impact bone health and women can lose bone density and strength due to changes in hormone levels.

## Role of Menopausal Hormone Therapy (MHT) to protect bone health

During menopause women can lose bone strength and MHT (formerly known as HRT) helps to slow bone loss.

MHT is safe and effective for most women under the age of 60 to both relieve symptoms of menopause and help reduce risk of osteoporosis. It may also be prescribed for women under 60 who are unable to take other osteoporosis medicines and is particularly useful for women who have undergone early menopause (before 45 years of age).

For women diagnosed with osteoporosis, including those who have sustained a fracture, specific anti-osteoporosis treatment is typically prescribed.

## Early Menopause

Menopause commonly occurs in women in their early 50s. However some women will experience early menopause usually between 40–45 years. This means an impact on bone health may occur much earlier and therefore extra attention is required to protect bone health in this group of women. Early menopause can affect approx 5% of women and can occur spontaneously or result from chemotherapy or ovarian surgery or be related to family history of early menopause.

## Premature Menopause

Menopause that occurs in women younger than 40 years is called premature ovarian insufficiency. It is associated with a loss of function of the ovaries (ovaries do not release eggs regularly and do not produce usual amounts of oestrogen).

# Menopause and Bone Health cont.

## Other Common Risk Factors

Review other common risk factors for osteoporosis. If any risk factors apply to you – discuss these with your doctor.

Personal History	Medical Conditions	Medications
Family history of osteoporosis (parent/sibling)	Coeliac disease	Certain treatment for breast cancer
Previous fracture (from minor bump or fall)	Overactive thyroid or parathyroid	Glucocorticoids (steroids)
Loss of height (3 cm or more)	Rheumatoid arthritis	Anti-epilepsy treatment
Smoking/Excessive alcohol	Early menopause	
Inadequate calcium, vitamin D or lack of exercise	Chronic kidney disease or liver disease	
	Diabetes	

## Calcium. Vitamin D. Exercise

Take simple steps to help support your bone health.

Focus On	Recommended
<b>Calcium</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,000 mg per day from the diet</li> <li>• Increasing to 1,300 mg for women over 50 years and men over 70 years</li> <li>• If dietary intake is low a supplement may be required</li> </ul>
<b>Vitamin D</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited sun exposure – in summer a few minutes per day, in winter slightly longer</li> <li>• Avoid UV index above 3</li> <li>• If vitamin D deficiency is confirmed by your doctor a supplement may be required</li> </ul>
<b>Exercise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific mix of weight bearing, resistance training and balance exercises</li> </ul>

For more information about menopause visit the Australasian Menopause Society (AMS): [www.menopause.org.au/health-info](http://www.menopause.org.au/health-info)

- AMS fact sheet about menopausal symptoms: [www.menopause.org.au/health-info/fact-sheets/menopause-what-are-the-symptoms](http://www.menopause.org.au/health-info/fact-sheets/menopause-what-are-the-symptoms)
- AMS fact sheet about Menopausal Hormone therapy (MHT): [www.menopause.org.au/health-info/fact-sheets/what-is-menopausal-hormone-therapy-mht-and-is-it-safe](http://www.menopause.org.au/health-info/fact-sheets/what-is-menopausal-hormone-therapy-mht-and-is-it-safe)

### For more information



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**1800 242 141**



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**healthybonesaustralia.org.au**



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