

Glossary of Terms

Fact Sheet for Women

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT)	Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) means a clot has formed in the deep veins in the leg. Small pieces can break off, travel up the veins and lead to a blood clot in the lungs (pulmonary embolus).
Early menopause	Menopause occurring between 40-45 years of age is called early menopause.
Endometrium	The endometrium is the lining of the uterus (womb) which is shed during menstruation (menstrual periods).
Endometrial Cancer	Endometrial cancer is a tumour that forms in the endometrium (or lining of the uterus).
Endocrinologist	A doctor who specialises in the care of people with hormonal problems
Gynaecologist	A doctor who specializes in the care of a women's reproductive system both medically and surgically.
Menopausal Hormone Therapy (MHT) Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)/ Hormone Therapy (HT)	MHT also known as hormone replacement therapy (HRT) or hormone therapy (HT) refers to hormones prescribed to help oestrogen deficiency. This is most commonly prescribed for women around the time of menopause to relieve menopausal symptoms and to prevent osteoporosis. Women with other causes of oestrogen deficiency (such as pituitary gland problems) may also be prescribed hormone therapy.
Hysterectomy	A hysterectomy occurs when a woman's uterus or womb is removed. She will no longer be able to bear children and will not have any further periods. However, the ovaries will continue to function and will continue to produce hormones if the woman is premenopausal.
Intrauterine Contraceptive Device (IUD, IUCD, IUS)	A type of long-acting reversible contraceptive (LARC) usually made of flexible plastic that is put in a woman's uterus by her doctor. In addition to contraception, a progestogen releasing IUCD/IUS may also be used for the treatment of heavy periods and as part of MHT.
Oestrogen/Estrogen	Oestrogen is a hormone produced mainly in a woman's ovaries. Oestrogen acts throughout the body and is especially important for the female body changes at puberty and for reproduction. After menopause oestrogen levels are very low.

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Off-Label Use	Off-label use is when a drug is used to treat a condition which is different to that which it was first made for, and which is outside the specific purpose for which it was approved by Australia's medicines regulator, the Therapeutic Goods Administration. Off label use requires consent from the patient.
Oophorectomy	Oophorectomy is the term used to describe the surgical removal of one or both ovaries.
Osteopenia	Osteopenia, sometimes called low bone mass, refers to bone that is thinner than normal. Further bone loss may lead to osteoporosis.
Osteoporosis	Osteoporosis is the result of the changes in the bones making them more fragile which can lead to fractures that occur with minimal trauma. Oestrogen is important for bone health and menopause related oestrogen deficiency can lead to osteoporosis.
Ovaries	Ovaries are the pair of female reproductive organs located in the pelvis next to the womb that store and release eggs. The ovaries also make hormones, estrogen, progesterone and testosterone.
Menopause	Menopause is the final menstrual period and is said to have occurred when there have been no menstrual periods for one year. The average age of menopause in Australian women is 51 years (range 45-55 years).
Peri-menopause	Peri-menopause refers to the time from when changes in menstrual cycle (missed periods or changes in amount of bleeding) or menopausal symptoms start to one year after the last menstrual period. It usually starts in a woman's 40's and lasts an average of 4-6 years.
Post-Menopause	Post-Menopause starts one year after the last menstrual period.
Premature Menopause	Premature menopause is menopause occurring before age 40 years and includes surgical removal of ovaries (bilateral oophorectomy). Premature ovarian insufficiency (POI) may also be included under this heading although cessation of ovarian function in POI is not always irreversible.
Premature (or primary) ovarian insufficiency (POI)	Loss of ovarian function occurring in women younger than 40 years of age affecting approximately 4% of women. This was previously referred to as premature ovarian failure; however, the preferred term is now premature (or primary) ovarian insufficiency (POI).
Progesterone	Progesterone is the natural hormone found in a woman's body that helps prepare the endometrium (lining of the uterus) for the fertilized egg.

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Progestogen	Progestogen is a hormone which can be natural or synthetic, but has a similar effect on a woman's body as progesterone. Progestin is a synthetic hormone which has the actions of progesterone.
Pulmonary embolus	A pulmonary embolus (PE) is when a blood clot formed elsewhere, travels through the system of veins and lodges in the lungs. This can be fatal.
Surgical Menopause	Surgically-induced menopause occurs when the ovaries are removed in an operation. Due to the abrupt cut-off of ovarian hormones, surgical menopause can cause a sudden onset of menopause symptoms.
Testosterone	Testosterone is the male sex hormone found in smaller amounts in women. In women, increased levels of testosterone can lead to acne and can cause unwanted facial or body hair (hirsutism). Low levels of testosterone in women may contribute to loss of libido and sometimes low mood and energy.
Uterus	The uterus (also called the womb) is the female reproductive organ in which a baby develops during pregnancy. A menstrual period occurs when the unfertilised egg from the ovary and the lining of the uterus is shed each month.
Menstrual cycle	Monthly hormonal changes which lead to a bleed or period. During each menstrual cycle an egg is released (ovulation) in preparation for fertilisation so that a pregnancy may occur.
Withdrawal bleed	Regular bleeding that occurs while on hormonal contraception is known as a withdrawal bleed, not a menstrual cycle

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