



Achieving Optimal Health

Healthy behaviors and regular clinical exams are the keys to health. Peri- and postmenopausal women should have regular physical exams by a healthcare provider. During this checkup, the clinician will need information on:

- Health history (personal and family);
- Health concerns or current problems;
- Diet;
- Level of physical activity;
- Smoking status;
- Drugs and health remedies being used;
- All healthcare providers currently being consulted.

During the checkup, various tests can determine heart, breast, pelvic, and rectal health. Bone health may be evaluated, particularly for women experiencing early menopause. Regular mammograms are important for women aged 40 and over. Pap tests are also recommended, even after menopause. Height measurements detect loss of height, which may be indicative of osteoporosis. Blood, urine, and other lab tests can help to screen for certain diseases or risks of diseases, such as diabetes, thyroid disease, urogenital infection, colorectal cancer, and heart disease. Hormone level measurements may be helpful, but they can be misleading during perimenopause because hormone levels can fluctuate and testing can be unreliable.





*Menopause can
be a time of
new beginnings.*

During the checkup, immunizations to prevent infectious diseases can be updated, and various key health components can be discussed, such as:

- Sexuality;
- Exercise;
- Alcohol use or abuse;
- Drug use or abuse;
- Physical abuse;
- Reducing stress;
- Improving sleep;
- Smoking cessation;
- Achieving and maintaining ideal weight;
- Health-promoting nutrition, including calcium.

The first step toward improving quality of life is to choose healthy lifestyle habits. If needed, various treatment options or changes in treatment can then be discussed. Treatment plans should include the following:

- Discussion of risks and benefits;
- A plan to watch for side effects;
- How outcomes will be monitored;
- Possible treatment alternatives.

A Time of New Beginnings

Many women who go through extremely difficult times in their lives emerge stronger and more confident than ever. Having faced the challenge of early menopause, with perhaps the challenge of a serious illness as well, many women find they are able to face other challenges more easily. Some go back to school, embark on a new career, begin new relationships, or renew old ones.

Asking for help – whether from family and friends or from professionals – is a sign of strength, not weakness. Help can come in the form of counseling, information that empowers women to participate fully in their own health-related decisions, support from other women going through similar experiences, and care and support from family members and friends.

Information about menopause, early menopause, and related health issues can be obtained from the organizations listed on pages 63-64. In addition, local support groups are often available. Some women who are unable to find a support group are greatly empowered by starting one of their own – helping themselves by helping others.

Early menopause and serious illness can be isolating experiences. Women are so accustomed to taking care of others that they sometimes put their own needs last. In reality, the best thing a woman can do for her loved ones is to take care of herself, and to let them help take care of her. For this reason, NAMS suggests that women share this guidebook with their family members and friends, so that they might better understand what they are going through.

NAMS hopes that all women reading this guidebook will experience many positive changes in their lives and health. Menopause can be a time of new beginnings. ✨