

Perimenopause, menopause, eating disorders and body image



Eating disorders and body dissatisfaction affect people of all genders and ages, including those experiencing perimenopause and menopause.

Almost one in four people experiencing an eating disorder in Australia each year are aged between 40-59¹, and the menopausal transition can present a window of vulnerability for eating disorders and negative body image to develop².

1 in 4

women experiencing menopause also report having body image issues³

Around 3.5%

of people in the menopausal phase are also experiencing an eating disorder⁴

14%

of women who have experienced perimenopause or menopause say they avoided having photos taken due to feeling negative about their body⁵

“Going through menopause is when I was most unhappy with my body as there is not much information on what is happening”

What is menopause and perimenopause?

Menopause refers to a woman's final menstrual period, which usually occurs between 45-55 years⁶. Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause, and common symptoms include irregular periods, hot flushes, sleep problems, headaches, aches and pains, dry vagina, sore breasts, mood changes, forgetfulness, brain fog, and anxiety or depression.

This can lead to changes in eating habits, increased stress and anxiety, body dissatisfaction

and feelings of loss of control, which are common factors in the development of eating disorders. Experiences of shame, stigma and misconceptions that eating disorders only impact young women can also cause distress.

While some may experience an eating disorder for the first time during menopause, others may experience a relapse or worsening of pre-existing eating disorder symptoms.

Tips to support your wellbeing during perimenopause and menopause

Choose a supportive healthcare professional

Ask your GP or healthcare professional if they understand eating disorders. If they don't, try to find a new provider that understands by searching the [Butterfly Referral Database](#)

Talking helps

Be open about your experiences with food, eating, exercise and how perimenopause/menopause is affecting this. If you're struggling, speak up.

Check your symptoms

Complete the [Perimenopause and Menopause Symptom checklist](#) from Jean Hailes for Women's Health to understand the symptoms and to use as a tool to discuss what you're going through with your GP or other healthcare professional.

Find community

Learn from and follow older women who have experienced menopause and those who embrace ageing. Peer support groups can be beneficial.

Move your body for joy

Try to take the focus off weight and move your body in ways that bring you joy, not dissatisfaction. Working with 'anti-diet' personal trainers can help!

Recognise you're worthy of support

Many women feel shame about eating disorders; that they should have 'grown out' of these issues by the time they reach midlife. Try to disrupt this and remember eating disorders don't discriminate.

View food as a source of fuel and nutrition

Move away from dieting or restricting calories to lose weight and aim to view food as a source of nutrition and fuel to support your changing body.

Understand the intersection & learn from lived experience

Access the free ['Menopause and Eating Disorders' e-learning course](#), offering a range of resources and support options, created by Monash University with support from Eating Disorders Victoria.

“Menopause especially and getting older has made me feel dissatisfied with my body. One day you look in the mirror and see your body shape changing before your very eyes”

Get support



Call Butterfly National Helpline

1800 ED HOPE (1800 33 4673)

or visit [Butterfly.org.au](https://butterfly.org.au)
to chat online or email,

7 days a week, 8am-midnight
(AEST/AEDT).

Eating Disorders
Victoria Helpline
1300 550 23



Learn More

Visit Jean Hailes for Women's Health to learn more about Perimenopause and menopause and access support

[Jeanhailes.org.au](https://jeanhailes.org.au)



Resources

Read stories of lived experience and find useful resources at

[Butterfly.org.au/women](https://butterfly.org.au/women)

References

- 1 Deloitte Access Economics. (2024). Paying the Price, Second Edition: The economic and social impact of eating disorders in Australia. Report commissioned for Butterfly Foundation. Sydney: Butterfly Foundation.
- 2 Mangweth-Matzek, B., Hoek, H.W., Rupp, C.I., Kemmler, G., Pope, H.G., & Kinzl, J. (2013) The menopausal transition – A possible window of vulnerability for eating pathology. International Journal of Eating Disorders. 46:6. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/eat.22157>
- 3 Liptember Foundation, 2024. Uncovering the reality: examining multi-dimensional aspects of women's mental health in Australia, 2024.
- 4 Finch, J. Xu, Z., Girdler, S. Baker, J. (2023) Netowkr analysis of eating disorder symptoms in women in perimenopause and early postmenopause. Menopause. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36728103/>
- 5 Butterfly Foundation, 2025. Body Image in Women Survey
- 6 Jean Hailes, nd. <https://www.jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/menopause/about-menopause>