



## Changes *in* Life: Menopause

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV)*

There are many transitional times in a woman’s life, but the onset of the menopause is often one of the most momentous. I have not enough space or time here to go into much detail and this is really just an overview. I will list some helpful websites at the bottom for those who wish to research the topic further.



As I approached a certain time in life, I knew I would soon have to cope with physical changes occurring within my body. These changes are known as the ‘Menopause’, my grandmother called it ‘The Change of Life’. She recognised it as a time when women would often ‘go a bit funny’. The average age of menopause in Western society today is 51 years but it can occur much earlier and even later. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century a women’s life expectancy was such that she would have been unlikely to make it past the age of 50. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century women are commonly living into their 80’s and 90’s, well beyond the age of menopause.

The menopause is an inevitable part of life for women. It is a transitional time and often coincides with other life changing events; children growing up and leaving home, changes in career and changes in relationships with parents. Many women in their fifties find that caring for their own children is replaced by caring for grandchildren or elderly relatives. Feelings of loss and bereavement are not uncommon. While the loss of fertile years may be a relief for some women for others it may trigger sadness at the realisation of what could have been and no longer can be. Loss of youth and the impending older years can lead to a sense of hopelessness and despondency about the future. Anxiety can heighten at this time. Little things taken in stride before now become massive issues. Fluctuating hormone levels often result in mood swings; tearfulness one day, irritableness and impatience the next. For some it can just be ‘mental foginess’ forgetting things, trouble with concentrating and finding it more difficult to multitask, lists and diaries become essential items! Due to changes in attitudes over the last few years ‘Menopause’ is now more openly referred to in both media and literature. However, many women are still reluctant to talk about the menopause and feel embarrassed about the symptoms they are suffering. While the physical symptoms may be more openly voiced it is the emotional and mental symptoms which are often harder to articulate.

Understanding that these feelings are a part of the normal process may be enlightening to some women. To realise that they are not going mad and definitely not the only one to experience these feelings! Every woman will experience the menopause differently and learn to cope with ‘the change’ in this period of their lives in varying and often creative ways. Once we have come to terms with the loss we can see hope for the future. For some it can be a time of newfound freedom. A time to discover new skills, take up a new job or become involved in church or charity work. It can mean more space in life in which to take up a hobby or sport which you previously didn’t have time for or just having more time for yourself. It may be a time when we are able to be used by God for His work. The time and experience of the older women in church is to be cherished and valued and certainly not underrated.



Menopause, therefore, need not be viewed as an ending but rather the start of something new. God has work for all of us to do regardless of age or stage of life. While we are willing and able, He will fill our days with His work.

*"I am sure of this, that He who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 1:6 Holman Christian Standard Bible)

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#### Useful Websites

- [MenopauseMatters.co.uk](https://www.menopausematters.co.uk)
- [Rockmymenopause.com](https://www.rockmymenopause.com)
- [Menopauseandme.co.uk](https://www.menopauseandme.co.uk)
- [British Menopause Society](https://www.britishtime.com)