

Hormones and your health



Language

- We take a broad and inclusive approach to the topic of women's health.
- We write health information for people with diverse backgrounds, experiences and identities. We use the terms 'women' and 'girls', but we acknowledge that these terms are not inclusive of all people who may use our content.

Presentation aims

By the end of this presentation, we hope you will:

- understand what hormones are and why they are important for your health
- know about some common conditions and life stages that are affected by hormones
- know how to live a healthy life.

What are hormones?

- Hormones are your body's chemical messengers.
- They tell your body what to do.
- There are 75 hormones in your body and the balance between them helps to keep you healthy.



Important hormones for women

- Reproductive hormones include:
 - oestrogen
 - progesterone
 - testosterone.
- Other hormones that affect women's health include:
 - cortisol
 - parathyroid hormone
 - melatonin
 - insulin.



Reproductive hormones



Oestrogen

- Affects many parts of your body.
- Maintains endometrium and cervix.
- Protects your bones.
- Drops by up to 90% after menopause.

Progesterone

- Prepares the uterus for pregnancy.
- Helps maintain a pregnancy.
- Stops being produced at menopause.

Testosterone

- Not just a male hormone.
- Has a role in sexual desire.
- Gradually decreases with age.

Times of major hormonal change

- Puberty
- Pregnancy
- Childbirth
- Perimenopause
- Menopause and postmenopause





Common conditions and life stages that are affected by hormones

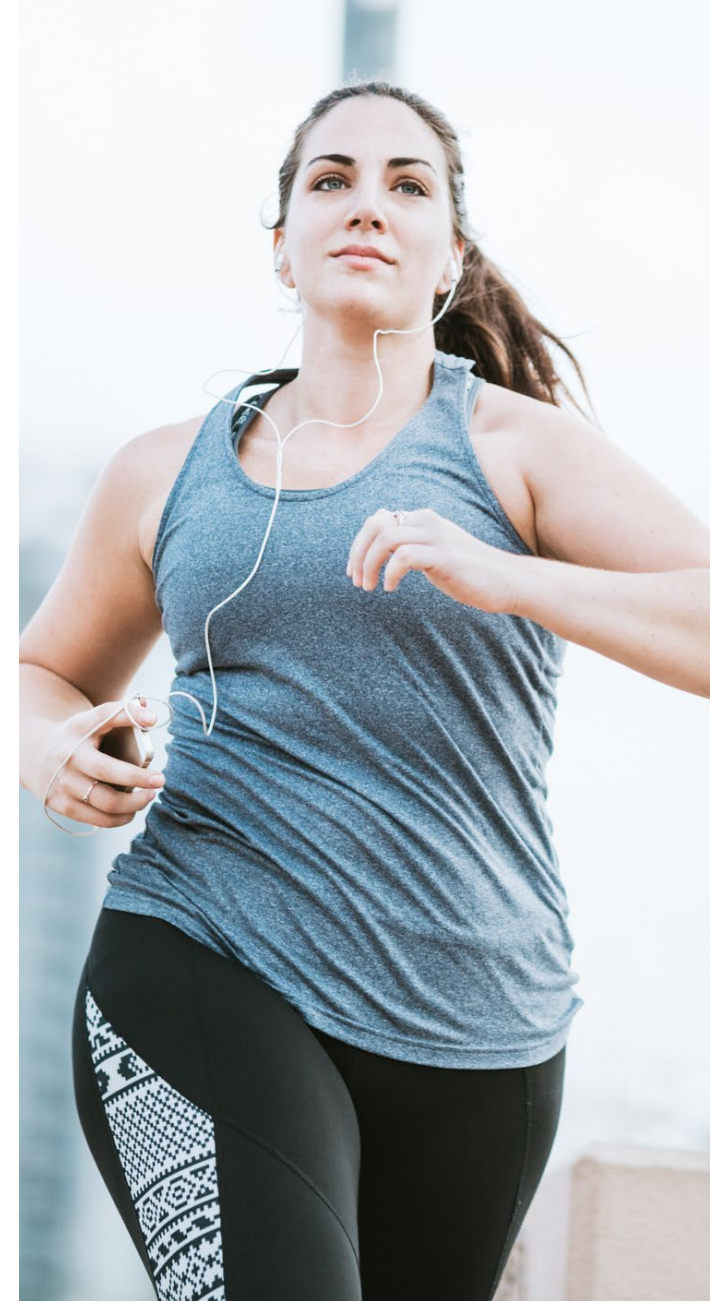
Premenstrual syndrome (PMS)

- Symptoms 1–2 weeks before a period that impact quality of life.
- Emotional symptoms, like irritability, anxiety and difficulty concentrating.
- Physical symptoms, like constipation, diarrhoea, swollen and tender breasts, acne and pimples.



PMS management

- Exercise
- Complementary medicine and therapies
- Psychotherapy
- Hormonal treatments
- Medicine



Premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD)

- Severe form of PMS.
- Affects up to 8% of women of reproductive age.
- Makes it hard to function at home, at work and in relationships in the lead-up to your period.



PMDD management

- Antidepressant medication (SSRIs)
- Hormone treatment
- Psychotherapy
- Lifestyle
- Reduce stress
- Complementary medicine and therapies
- Talk to your doctor



Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)

- PCOS symptoms include:
 - irregular periods
 - acne and excess hair growth
 - weight gain
 - issues with fertility
 - anxiety and depression.
- PCOS increases your risk of diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol.



PCOS management

- Healthy lifestyle
- Lose weight if required
- Medical, hormonal and cosmetic treatments
- Talk to your doctor



Endometriosis

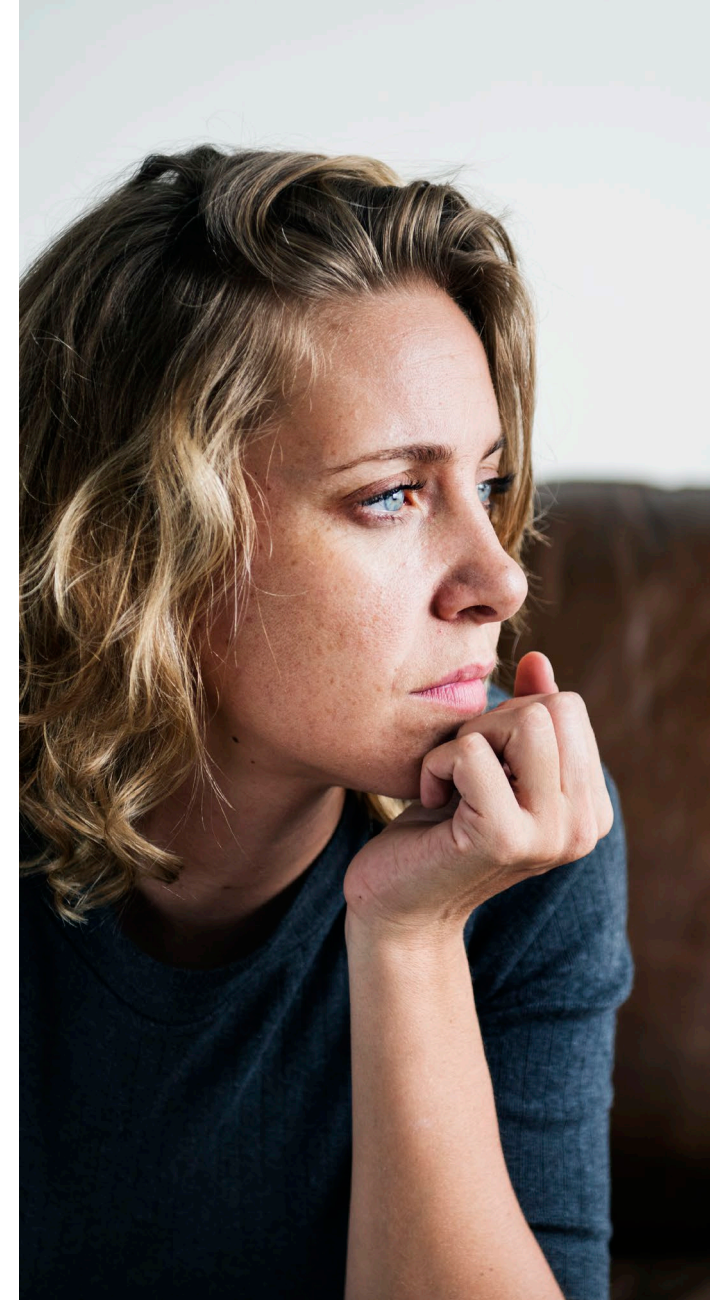
Condition in which cells similar to those that line the uterus grow in other parts of the body, usually in the pelvis and reproductive organs.



Endometriosis symptoms

It can cause:

- pain and bloating
- painful sex
- heavy bleeding
- constipation or diarrhoea
- tiredness
- mood changes
- reduced quality of life.



Endometriosis management

- Pain-relief medication
- Hormone therapy
- Surgery
- Fertility treatment
- Talk to your doctor



Menopause

- It's the final menstrual period.
- Most women reach menopause at 45–55 years of age.



Stages of menopause transition



The lead-up to menopause (running out of eggs)

The final menstrual period (no more eggs)

Starts 12 months after the final menstrual period

Menopause management

- Lifestyle
- Menopausal hormone therapy (MHT)
- Non-hormonal treatments
- Complementary therapies

Pharmacy-compounded (bioidentical) hormones are not recommended.





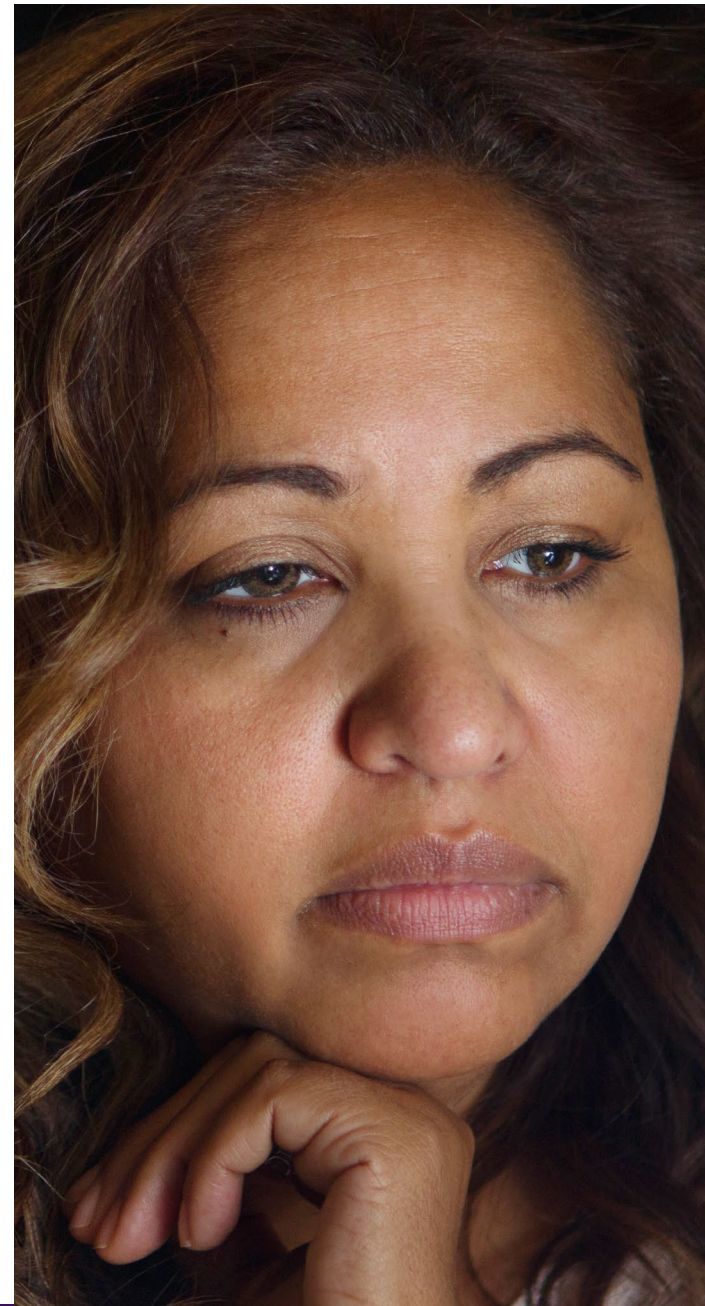
How hormones affect your mood, heart health, bone health and sleep

Hormones and your mood

Many hormones can affect your mood.

For example:

- reproductive hormones
- cortisol – stress hormone.



Hormones and your heart health

Hormones help to keep your cardiovascular system healthy. For example, they maintain:

- healthy blood pressure
- healthy levels of cholesterol and triglycerides
- the lining of blood vessels.

Cardiovascular disease (heart disease and stroke) is the leading cause of death in Australian women.



Hormones and your heart health

- Changes in hormone levels at menopause can affect your heart health.
- As oestrogen levels decrease, the risk of heart disease increases. For example:
 - increased blood pressure
 - changes to blood fats like cholesterol and triglycerides.



Hormones and your bone health

Hormones help to keep your bones healthy and strong.

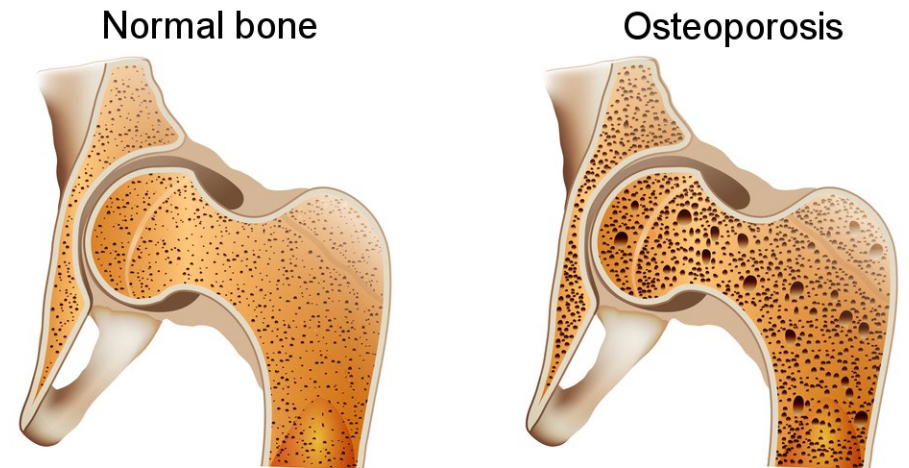
For example:

- oestrogen helps to stop bones from breaking down
- vitamin D and parathyroid hormone help balance levels of calcium in the body.



Hormones and your bone health – osteoporosis

- Bones become thin, weak, fragile and easy to break.
- Common among postmenopausal women due to the drop in oestrogen.
- To reduce your risk:
 - eat calcium-rich foods
 - get enough vitamin D
 - do weight-bearing exercise
 - limit alcohol and caffeine.



Hormones and your sleep

- Sleep is important for physical and mental wellbeing.
- Your body clock is controlled by your body's circadian rhythm.
- Circadian rhythm is maintained by hormones like melatonin and cortisol.
- Good sleep helps maintain your circadian rhythm and prevent disease.



Poor sleep

Poor or not enough sleep:

- affects your ability to regulate stress hormones, leading to increased blood pressure
- increases your risk of obesity, diabetes and heart disease
- can contribute to depression and anxiety
- affects your ability to control appetite and blood sugar levels.

Sleep can help keep your body in balance.



**A healthy lifestyle can help keep
your hormones in balance**

Eat well

- Eat foods from the five food groups each day.
- Choose wholegrains over highly processed grains.
- Eat regular meals and snacks when you feel hungry.
- Include healthy fats like fatty fish and avocado in your diet.
- Eat brightly coloured fruit and vegetables.



Move more

- Build physical activity into your life – try to do at least 30 minutes of exercise each day.
- Try different activities to find ones you enjoy.



Tips to sleep well

- Reduce your caffeine intake.
- Avoid heavy meals late at night.
- Limit alcohol consumption.
- Be physically active.
- Go to bed and wake up at regular times.
- Hide the clock.
- Try relaxation.



See your doctor for a health check

- A health check is a medical examination by a health professional.
- Have regular general health checks with your doctor to:
 - check on your current health
 - find health issues early
 - have age-specific screening tests
 - learn about your health.
- Ask your doctor if you need other tests and how often you should have them.



More information and resources on hormones

- Jean Hailes for Women's Health
jeanhailes.org.au
- Better Health Channel
betterhealth.vic.gov.au
- Health Direct
healthdirect.gov.au/hormones



Thank you

Go to jeanhailes.org.au/subscribe for updates on the latest in women's health



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Disclaimer. This information does not replace medical advice. If a person is worried about their health, they should talk to their doctor or healthcare team.

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