



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

MENOPAUSE:

Part of our journey of physical, mental and spiritual health

A message from Dr. Unjali Malhotra, FNHA Medical Officer, Women's Health

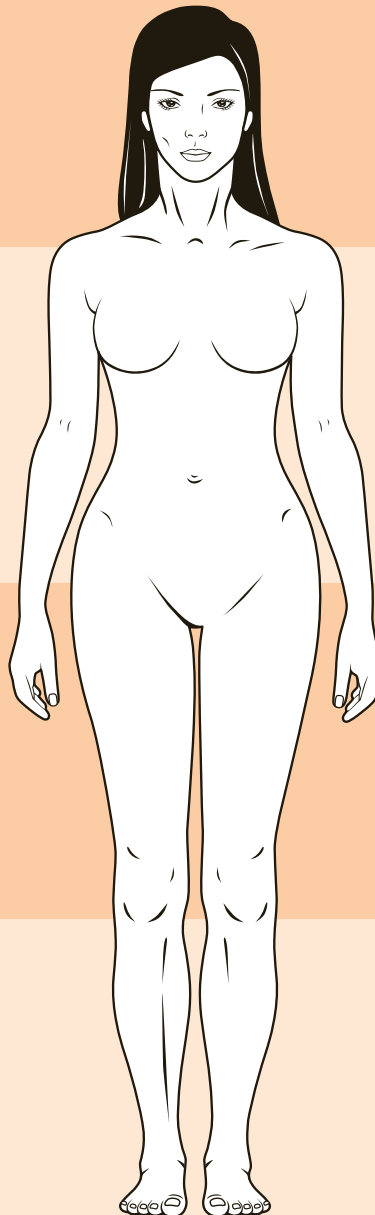
Menopause is known to be a time of change, but it also represents a lifelong journey of physical, mental and spiritual health. Part of what makes and keeps us healthy overall, including during menopause, is accessing safe and effective health care, which is something the FNHA is advocating for and working on; our genetics, which we should try to be aware of and work with; our environment, which we can all do our part to protect and improve; and healthy behaviours, including those encouraged by the FNHA in our four wellness streams, which all of us should all strive to practise to ensure healthy aging. Following are some strategies for dealing with menopause that I hope you will find helpful!

Hot flashes: The classic symptom of menopause is the dreaded hot flash. Coping strategies include dressing in layers, avoiding triggers like alcohol, maintaining a healthy body weight, and keeping iced/cool drinks on hand. Talk to your healthcare provider about other alternatives.

Breast health: Breast cancer increases with age. At age 50, one in 43 women will get it; at 60, one in 29; and at 70, 1 in 26. Safe exercise, healthy eating, maintaining a healthy weight, limiting alcohol intake and not smoking can reduce breast cancer risk.

Bleeding: Irregular bleeding, especially more frequent or heavier vaginal bleeding, can be a warning sign. I encourage you to get this checked – be seen, be heard, and know that if something seems that it is not right, it warrants a check-up to figure it out!

Bone health: Estrogen changes during this transition can impact bone strength. Things you can do to boost bone health and prevent fractures over your lifetime include consuming healthy foods and Vitamin D (especially if you live in a cloudy city), and taking safe exercise.



Mental health: Menopause is considered a “window of vulnerability”; women can experience mood changes such as depression and anxiety. Coping strategies include getting connected in a community or support group, practising mindfulness, and speaking to a healthcare provider.

Cardiovascular health: Hormonal changes in menopause are a complex influencer on women's cardiovascular health. Almost 80% of premature heart disease is preventable, so protect your heart by following the FNHA's four wellness streams and getting your blood pressure checked!

Gynecological health: Hormonal changes at this time can result in bladder leakage, pain with sex, vaginal discomfort, and frequent urinary tract or yeast infections. Please talk to your healthcare provider about managing these with one of the easy and safe treatments available.

Weight control: As we age, our metabolism changes. We may find that we're now a little squishy in certain places, and that it's harder to maintain a healthy body weight. Keep it simple: 1) avoid processed food, 2) limit sugar, and 3) walk, swim or do another safe activity.