

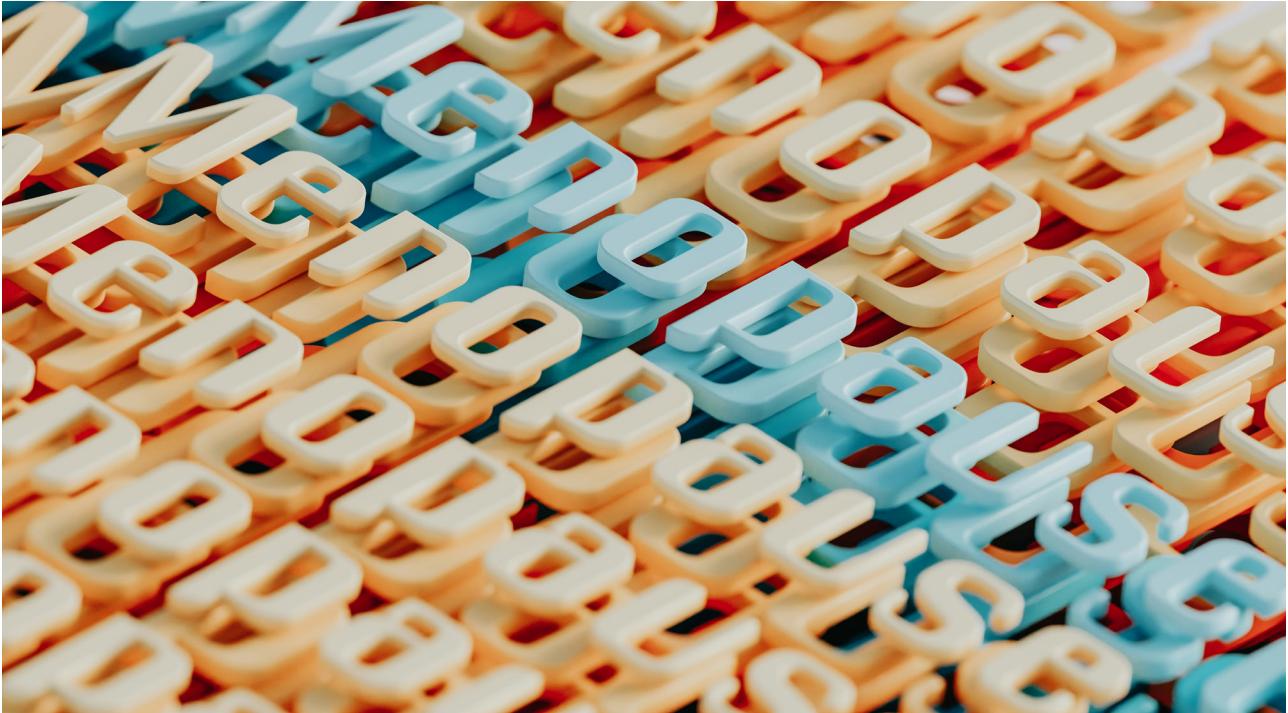


Lancashire Gynaecologist

Eric Mutema

Understanding Medically
Induced Menopause

Menopause is a natural biological process that marks the end of a woman's reproductive years, typically occurring in their late 40s to early 50s. However, some women may experience menopause earlier than expected due to medical interventions. Medically induced menopause can be a necessary treatment for various health conditions. This article explores what medically induced menopause is, how it works and why some women may require it.



What is Medically Induced Menopause?

Medically induced menopause, also known as induced menopause or surgical menopause, occurs when medical procedures or treatments cause a woman's ovaries to stop producing hormones, leading to the cessation of menstruation. This can occur through several methods, including:

Surgical Removal of Ovaries (Oophorectomy): This is a surgical procedure in which one or both ovaries are removed. It is often performed as a preventive measure against ovarian cancer or as part of treatment for other gynaecological conditions. This can lead to immediate menopause, as the primary source of oestrogen is eliminated.

Chemotherapy or Radiation Therapy: Certain cancer treatments can damage the ovaries, leading to reduced hormone production and menopause. This is particularly common in women undergoing treatment for breast cancer or other reproductive cancers. The extent of ovarian damage can vary, and some women may enter menopause immediately after treatment, while others may experience a gradual decline in hormone levels.

Hormonal Treatments: Medications can be used to suppress ovarian function, leading to induced menopause. This is sometimes employed in the treatment of hormone-sensitive cancers. These treatments often involve administering luteinizing hormone-releasing hormone (LHRH) agonists, which effectively "turn off" the ovaries temporarily or permanently.

How does Medically Induced Menopause work?

Medically induced menopause functions by disrupting the hormonal signals that regulate the menstrual cycle. Normally, the ovaries produce oestrogen and progesterone, which control the menstrual cycle and support reproductive functions. When these hormones are reduced or eliminated, the following occurs:

Cessation of Menstrual Periods: Women will stop having monthly periods, similar to natural menopause. This can relieve the symptoms associated with menstruation, such as cramps and mood swings.

Hormonal Changes: The body experiences a drop in oestrogen and progesterone, leading to various physical and emotional symptoms. These changes can significantly impact a woman's overall health and quality of life.

Symptoms of Menopause: Common symptoms may include hot flashes, night sweats, mood swings, vaginal dryness, and sleep disturbances. Some women may also experience cognitive changes, such as difficulty concentrating or memory issues.

Long-Term Effects: Prolonged oestrogen deficiency can lead to other health concerns, such as osteoporosis and cardiovascular issues. Therefore, monitoring and managing these risks is essential for women undergoing medically induced menopause.

Induced Menopause

Induced menopause can cause **significant turmoil** in women's lives, especially in those still in their prime reproductive years.

ABOUT

Menopause that is a result of medical treatment:

- **Surgery** (bilateral oophorectomy)
- **Medications** (chemotherapy)
- **Radiotherapy**

It's generally permanent, but may be reversed in some cases.

WHY IT'S DONE

To treat or lower the risk of developing the following conditions:

- Endometriosis
- Ovarian cancer
- Tubo-ovarian abscesses
- Ovarian cysts & benign tumors
- High ovarian or breast cancer risk

SYMPTOMS

Tend to be **more intense and abrupt** than with natural menopause.

- Hot flashes
- Loss of libido
- Depression
- Mood swings

Women face higher risks of osteoporosis, heart disease, and other health problems.

TREATMENT

Aimed at reducing symptoms and maintaining good health:

- Healthy lifestyle practices
- Alternative therapies
- Herbal supplements
- Psychotherapy
- Medications

Why do some women require Medically Induced Menopause?

There are several reasons why medically induced menopause may be necessary for some women:

Cancer Treatment: Women diagnosed with hormone-sensitive cancers, such as breast or ovarian cancer, may undergo medically induced menopause to reduce the levels of hormones that can fuel tumour growth. This strategy can help prevent cancer recurrence.

Severe Endometriosis: For women suffering from endometriosis, severe pain and other complications can be relieved through induced menopause, which stops the menstrual cycle and reduces hormonal fluctuations. This can dramatically improve the quality of life for many women.

Preventive Measures: Some women with a strong family history of breast or ovarian cancer may choose to undergo oophorectomy as a preventive measure, thus inducing menopause. Genetic testing, such as BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutations, can inform these decisions.

Management of Other Gynaecological Issues: Conditions like fibroids or abnormal uterine bleeding may be treated through surgical or hormonal interventions that lead to menopause. In these cases, the benefits of symptom relief and improved quality of life often outweigh the potential disadvantages.

Palliative Care: For women with advanced cancer, inducing menopause may be part of a palliative care strategy to alleviate symptoms and improve overall comfort.

Conclusion

Medically induced menopause is a significant medical intervention that can provide relief and preventive care for women facing certain health challenges. While it shares many symptoms with natural menopause, understanding its implications and reasons for necessity can help women make informed decisions regarding their health.

The decision to undergo medically induced menopause is often complex and requires careful consideration of individual health circumstances and risks. In many cases Hormone Replacement Therapy may be used (HRT), especially if the patient is under the age of 45.

If you are considering or have been advised to undergo medically induced menopause, it is crucial to consult with a healthcare provider to discuss the potential benefits and risks involved. They can provide guidance on managing symptoms and maintaining long-term health, ensuring that women receive comprehensive care during this transition. By understanding medically induced menopause, women can take proactive steps to navigate their health journey effectively.

Mr Eric Mutema
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How the Lancashire Gynaecologist can help

Mr Eric Mutema is a highly experienced and respected Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist. He founded his private practice, the Lancashire Gynaecologist, to provide a service to women in Lancashire and beyond and respond to the shortage of specialist gynaecological services available to women missing out on individualised care and treatment. The Lancashire Gynaecologist offers patients individual attention, an empathetic, compassionate approach and patient-centred care. His patients will receive a full consultation that takes their overall health into account and subsequent treatments will be tailored to meet the needs of the individual woman. So please don't wait and put off seeking treatment; we're available, convenient and we can help you.



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