

Self-Advocacy in MENOPAUSE & PERIMENOPAUSE

Because understanding your body is power—and speaking up is protection.

WHAT IS PERIMENOPAUSE AND MENOPAUSE?

Before you can advocate for yourself, you need to know what you're navigating.

PERIMENOPAUSE

This is the transitional phase leading up to menopause when estrogen and progesterone levels begin to fluctuate. It can begin in your late 30s or early 40s, sometimes even earlier. You may still have periods—though they might be irregular—but also experience symptoms like:

- Hot flashes or night sweats
- Mood swings or increased anxiety
- Sleep problems
- Brain fog or forgetfulness
- Changes in libido
- Vaginal dryness
- Fatigue or weight shifts

This phase can last anywhere from 4 to 10 years. For many women, this is the stage where symptoms hit hardest—and where they are most often overlooked or misdiagnosed.

MENOPAUSE

Menopause is defined as going 12 consecutive months without a period, with no other medical cause. The average age is around 51, but many Black women enter menopause earlier. Menopause marks the end of reproductive years, but it is not the end of vitality.

Some symptoms may continue after menopause begins—like vaginal dryness, insomnia, or joint pain—but this phase can also be a turning point for clarity, confidence, and reclaiming your health on your own terms.

WHY SELF-ADVOCACY MATTERS—ESPECIALLY FOR BLACK WOMEN

Menopause and perimenopause are real, complex, and still too often misunderstood—especially when it comes to Black women. Research shows that Black women tend to experience symptoms earlier, and those symptoms are often more severe and longer lasting than in other groups.

We're also more likely to have our concerns dismissed, less likely to be offered effective treatment, and less likely to be referred to specialists.

That's why we have to speak up, ask questions, and advocate for care that centers our needs.



ASK THESE QUESTIONS AT YOUR NEXT APPOINTMENT

- Could what I'm experiencing be related to perimenopause or menopause?
- Are there tests to help figure out what stage I'm in?
- What options do I have for treatment—and what do you recommend for someone like me?
- What are the risks and benefits of hormone therapy in my case?
- Are there non-hormonal options I should consider?
- What lifestyle changes can help me feel more like myself again?
- Can you refer me to a menopause specialist or someone certified by NAMS?

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS IN THE ROOM

You have the right to:

- Be taken seriously
- Ask every question on your mind
- Say "I don't feel heard" and expect a real answer
- Bring someone with you for backup
- Leave a provider who won't listen or take you seriously

Your body. Your experience. Your power.

HOW TO SPEAK UP WITHOUT HOLDING BACK

- Track your symptoms and bring them with you. (Make it plain.)
- Write down your questions so you don't forget in the moment.
- Lead with your truth: "I haven't been feeling like myself—and I want answers."
- If you get brushed off, ask: "Can you explain why you don't think it's menopause?"
- Bring someone with you who can support you or take notes.

RESOURCES WE TRUST

- Grown Woman Talk by Dr. Sharon Malone
- Generation M: The New Menopause by Dr. Jessica Shepherd
- This Is Menopause by Dr. Mary Claire Haver
- Menopause in Color journal by Dr. Stephanie Moss
- The Black Girl's Guide to Menopause by Omisade Burney-Scott
- The M Factor (Documentary Film)
- North American Menopause Society: www.menopause.org
- Black Women's Health Imperative: www.bwhi.org/powerinthepause

