

## **Pre-Menopause**

Source: [The Daisy Network](#)

Menopause is the time in a person's life when their periods begin to stop, hormone levels change and their ovaries lose their reproductive function. It is a natural process of aging for females between 45-55 years of age, however it is possible that **premature menopause (premature ovarian insufficiency – POI)** can occur when a person is still in their teens, 20s, 30s or early 40s. This is referred to as **early menopause** when it occurs below the age of 40.

POI, in simpler terms, means that the **ovaries aren't working properly**. They have stopped producing eggs before they should and they are unable to produce the hormones oestrogen and progesterone, both which have important roles in women's health and wellbeing. It is slightly different to menopause as it can occasionally result in a period, ovulation or even pregnancy.

- *It is common in 1 in 100 women under the age of 40, 1 in 1000 under 30 and 1 in 10,000 under 20. Overall, it affects approximately 5% of the population before the age of 45.*

POI can occur for several reasons, however there is still a lot that is unknown. For around **90%** of women, there is **no underlying cause**. Some of the causes are:

- **Auto-immune disease** – These are conditions in which the body's immune system can attack its own tissues. If damage occurs to the ovaries, it can result in POI. It is also connected with other auto-immune disorders including underactive thyroid, type 1 diabetes, and Addison's disease.
- **Genetic diseases** – Abnormalities in the female sex chromosome (X) or other genes affecting the sex hormone function can cause POI. It is also linked to Turner Syndrome, Fragile X syndrome and galactosaemia. These are more common in women with a family history of POI.
- **Infection** – There are reports of POI occurring after infection including mumps, tuberculosis and malaria, but this is extremely rare.
- **Surgery** – Surgical removal of the ovaries before the age of 40 is another form of POI. Abrupt removal of ovarian hormones can lead to a sudden onset of menopause symptoms.
- **Cancer Treatment** – As well as surgery, cancer treatments such as chemotherapy or radiotherapy can cause damage to the ovaries, resulting in POI. This is dependent, however, on the chemo drugs used, the site of the radiotherapy and your age at the time of treatment.

It can take many women a long time to get diagnosed with POI. Many people, including health professionals, attribute having irregular or no periods to things such as stress, weight changes or other gynaecological conditions such as polycystic ovarian syndrome. It is recommended that further investigations should be carried out if your periods have stopped or become infrequent for around 4-6 months.

**The Daisy Network is a registered charity is committed to providing information and support to women diagnosed with Premature Menopause, also known as Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI). It is the ONLY charity in the UK for women with POI.**

Their aim is to:

- Provide a support network of people to talk to
- Allow members to share information about their personal experience of POI

- Provide information on treatments and research within the fields of HRT and assisted conception
- Raise awareness of the condition among GPs and the wider medical community

For more information, please visit: [Charity for Women with POI | The Daisy Network](#)