

Questions to ask about treatment and treatment induced menopause



If you have cancer or a health condition such as endometriosis you may need to have a medical treatment that can bring on menopause. This is known as treatment induced menopause or medical menopause. Treatment induced menopause can be temporary or permanent, but this is dependent on what treatment you are having and why.

It is important to firstly discuss and understand the medical treatment recommended for you and the potential implications. This will help you prepare for what you might experience during/after (such as treatment induced menopause). To help discussions with your healthcare team, below are key questions you might ask about treatment and treatment induced menopause. You can adapt these questions for yourself based on your individual circumstances.

Medical Treatment

Understanding your treatment options

- What treatment or treatments are you recommending for me – and why? (note, if you are also considering surgery with your treatment, there is [more information here](#).)
- Will I go into menopause because of treatment(s)?
- What are the benefits and potential risks of this treatment and how likely are they?
- How would you expect the treatment to affect my overall health and quality of life?
- If I am currently taking Menopausal Hormone Therapy (MHT), will I need to stop taking it before treatment and will I be able to return to using it after?
- When do you recommend for treatment to start – and is there anything I could do before or during to help me cope well?
- What are the alternatives to treatment?
- What happens if I don't do anything?
- Are there any studies or trials I could be part of that contribute to research in this area?

Fertility preservation and menopause as a result of this medical treatment

- How likely is temporary compared to permanent menopause in my situation?
- What chemotherapy medicine(s) would I be having and how toxic are they to my ovaries?
- What radiation therapy would I need and how close to my ovaries would it be targeted?
- What hormone medicines would I need to treat my condition and how would it affect my ovaries?
- Is it possible to make menopause more likely to be temporary in my situation? If so, what steps are involved?



- Is there a way to have less toxic chemotherapy approach?
- Is there a way to shield my ovaries from radiation. For example, having surgery to move them?
- Is there a hormone medicine protocol to treat my condition that is less likely to bring on permanent menopause?
- What fertility preservation options are available to me before treatment, and can you refer me to a specialist? For example, egg freezing, embryo freezing or ovarian tissue freezing.
- How long would I need to wait after treatment before trying to get pregnant if it was possible?

Medically induced menopause

Short term treatment induced menopause symptoms and side effects

- What are the most common menopausal symptoms that could happen alongside the treatment side effects – and how long do they normally last for?
- How will you help me to manage these so I can get through treatment?
- How will they affect my ability to get on with daily life?
- How will I know if my menopause is temporary or permanent?
- Could menopause symptoms affect my ability in the workplace? For example, will it affect my cognitive ability such as memory?

Managing menopausal symptoms

- What are my options for managing treatment induced menopausal symptoms?
- What are the risks and benefits of Menopausal Hormone Therapy (MHT), and what kind could be suitable for me? (For example, are patches or gels better than pills? Is vaginal oestrogen OK?)
- What are my options if MHT is not suitable for me?
- What non hormonal treatments are there to manage menopause?
- What are the chances my condition might come back if I use MHT? For example, my kind of cancer or endometriosis or fibroids?
- What proven lifestyle approaches are there to manage menopausal symptoms? Are there other allied health professionals who I should see to help me manage my menopause, such as a dietitian or exercise physiologist?
- How can I best support my mental health and relationships during this change?
- What will the impact be on my sexual and vaginal health?
- Are there any treatments that can reduce the risk of problems for me?
- Is there anything I can do to support this?
- How will I know if my symptoms are related to menopause or treatment and does it matter?
- What are the chances my condition might come back if I use MHT? For example, my kind of cancer?



Long term risks from treatment induced menopause

- What are the potential long-term effects of this treatment overall, and on my hormonal health and what can we do to protect my bones, heart and brain health?
- Is there anything I can do to reduce those risks before, during and after treatment?
- Follow-up care for treatment-induced menopause
- Will I need follow-up appointments, and how often? How often would you want to see me during and then after treatment ends?
- How would we work together to manage my follow-up care? Would you manage all aspects of that care, or would you prefer that I see another doctor as well – for example, about any menopause symptoms? How would the two of you communicate?
- If I feel that I need to consult with additional medical specialists, will you be able to provide me with referrals? Could you refer me to a menopause specialist, for example?
- How soon would I be able to go back to GP care?

Emotional support for treatment-induced menopause

- I have fears about the treatment – are you able to help me work them through? (You will need to think about what these are and be able to share them with your medical team. For example, are you worried about surgery not solving your health issue, or about the impact of menopause on your general wellbeing or relationships?).
- How can I manage the emotional and psychological aspects of these procedures, including potential feelings of loss around fertility, fears about my condition coming back, or changes in body image?
- Are there support groups or counselling services available to help me cope with the emotional aspects of the surgery or treatment.

Costs

- What is the total cost of the treatment/surgery itself and the menopause treatment afterwards?
- Are there any out-of-pocket expenses I should be aware of?
- What are the costs of any follow-up appointments and treatments?
- Will I need to consider a budget for medical tests to monitor my health such as DEXA scans?
- Will I need to pay for any medications to offset side effects of the treatment?
- Your healthcare team
- How experienced are you in managing treatment-induced menopause?
- What is your experience with fertility preservation?
- Are you a fellow of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (if relevant)

This resource was developed in partnership with Jean Hailes for Women's Health