

Key Issues

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There are a number of things women experiencing menopause need to consider:

- Protect bone health (diet, weight bearing exercise).
- Maintain and improve fitness.
- Don't smoke.
- Reduce alcohol consumption (more than a glass a day speeds bone loss)
- Adopt a healthy heart diet.
- Supplement calcium.
- Check all herbal/alternative supplements with your doctor for interactions with HIV drugs.
- Use lubricants for sex.

Different women experience the changes of menopause very differently.

Menopause is not an illness, but it does have 'symptoms'; hot flushes, mood changes, night sweats and fatigue are par for the course. You may become more prone to accidental urination. Sexual changes also accompany the end of menstruation, including vaginal dryness, thinning of the vaginal walls and reduced libido. Your risk of heart disease increases, as does your risk of bone loss (osteoporosis). Some women experience changes in their thinking and understanding (cognitive changes). A good general site (not specific to women with HIV) is www.womhealth.org.au/factsheets/aboutmenopause.htm [1]

The impacts on how having HIV affects the experience of menopause is not really known yet. There is a suggestion that menopause may occur slightly earlier on average in women with HIV. The effects of HIV treatments, such as increased fats in the blood, suggest that the increased risk of heart disease may be higher. Changing any habits that further increase cardiovascular risks is a really important positive change to make in your life. Stopping smoking, improving your diet and doing regular moderate exercise are the key factors here. Earlier menopause can accelerate the loss of bone density, which increases the risk of early osteoporosis. [ARV](#) [2] A medication or other substance which is active against retroviruses such as HIV. drugs such as tenofovir may contribute to bone loss. Regular weight-bearing exercise and a calcium-rich (but not high fat) diet protect bone health. A bone density test can be arranged, if appropriate, through your doctor.

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Sex

- Experiment with lubricants until you find one that suits you.
- Practice pelvic floor exercises regularly (squeezing the pelvic floor, as if to stop the flow of urine, and holding for several seconds before release).

[Menopause](#) [3] [up](#) [3] [Hormone Replacement Therapy](#) > [4]

- [ANET resources](#)

Links:

[1] <http://www.womhealth.org.au/factsheets/aboutmenopause.htm>

[2] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/122>

[3] <http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/treat-yourself-right/menopause>

[4] <http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/treat-yourself-right/menopause/hormone-replacement-therapy>