

# Women's Health Over 40



what you should know

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Vital information about:

- breast cancer
- osteoporosis
- heart disease
- women's health issues

# *Women's Health Over 40*



*what you should know*

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*b*

Blackwe  
Science

This book is dedicated ...

To all the physicians, staff, and patients who helped me with my training; to my family;  
and to my best friend and husband Eric. — Caroline

To my husband Dan, daughter Gretchen, my parents Heinz and Helen, my brother Stuart  
and family, Stacy and Stephanie, and in loving memory of my sister Susan. — Janette

To my family, which is much more important to me now that I'm over 40. — Rona

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of the book: John Young, MD; Angela Ginty; and Paul Neff.

## Treatment Disclaimer

This book is for education purposes, not for use in the treatment of medical conditions. It is based on skilled medical opinion as of the date of publication. However, medical science advances and changes rapidly. Furthermore, diagnosis and treatment are often complex and involve more than one disease process or medical issue to determine proper care. If you believe you may have a medical condition described in the book, consult your doctor.

# Introduction

Women's health issues have received growing attention in the past few decades. However, there are 3 conditions which will dominate medical research and treatment in the years to come: breast cancer, osteoporosis, and heart disease.

Women, after age 40, experience an increased risk for each of these diseases. That is why this book focuses on these key topics by explaining risk factors, treatment and — most importantly — prevention.

Reading this book is an important first step in educating yourself and taking an active role in your health and well being. You and your family will benefit from the time you invest taking care of yourself.

— Caroline, Janette, and Rona

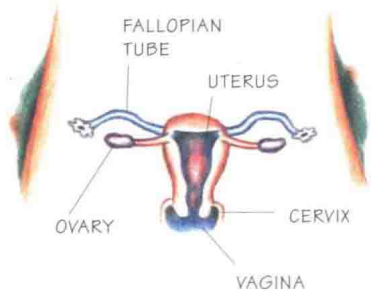
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# Menopause

# Pelvic anatomy

Understanding the female anatomy is the first step to understanding what health issues specifically affect a woman. A woman has 2 **ovaries**, 2 **fallopian tubes**, a **uterus**, **cervix**, and **vagina**. The ovary is the storage house for eggs and plays a major role in the production of estrogen. The fallopian tubes are important for the transportation of eggs.





The uterus has a lining known as the **endometrium**. This lining sheds every month when a woman has a period. It also becomes the womb for pregnancy. The uterus is composed of smooth muscle known as the **myometrium**.

The cervix is the opening to the uterus and is the connection to the vagina. The cervix has an external portion and an internal portion.

## Why age 40?

The first menstrual period, known as **menarche**, is a signal that a woman's body is beginning to release eggs. The onset of menses is controlled by many different hormones, including the production of estrogen. A woman will have menstrual cycles approximately 30 to 40 years of her life.

At a certain time in a woman's life, the ovaries are no longer able to produce estrogen. At this time, menstruation ceases. **Menopause** can occur surgically by removal of the ovaries or naturally through aging. The average age for the onset of menopause is 51; it usually occurs sometime between ages 48 and 55.

## What happens during menopause?

When menopause occurs naturally, it does not happen overnight. It is a gradual process.

Physical and emotional changes can begin to occur several years before a woman reaches menopause.

These changes begin when a woman is in her 40s.

This time period is known as **perimenopause**. During perimenopause, a woman may experience mood swings, hot flashes, and a change in the cycles of her period.

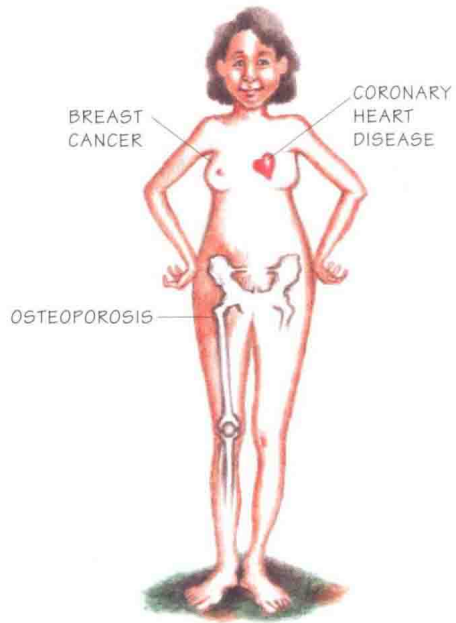
The menopausal experience is different for each woman.

## Post-menopausal concerns

The time after menopause is known as the **post-menopausal** period. Women who are post-menopausal have many health issues to consider.

If women understand the important health issues of menopause at an earlier age, they can make the transition into menopause more easily. Also, by understanding these issues, a woman may be able to identify her risks and possibly prevent disease.

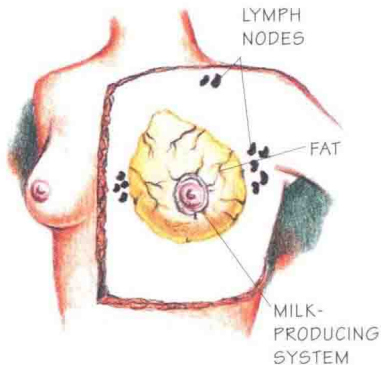
Among the most important health issues for women over 40 to understand are:  
**breast cancer,**  
**osteoporosis,**  
and **coronary heart disease.**



# Breast Cancer

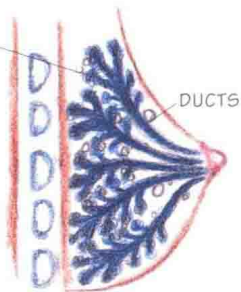
# Anatomy of the breast

Women's ribs are covered with chest muscles. A lining covers these muscles. The breast itself is composed of **fat, lymph vessels, blood vessels, and the milk-producing system**. The lymph vessels lead to **lymph nodes** under the arm, above the collarbone, and in the chest. The lymph system is the "fighter" system in our bodies.





LOBES  
AND  
LOBULES



Each breast has about 20 sections that are called **lobes**. Each lobe ends in milk-producing glands

or **lobules**. Thin tubes called **ducts** connect the lobules to the **nipple** to allow for the passage of milk.