

Women's Health

What You Need To Know



Permafold® Topics

- 1 Menstrual Cramps
- 2 Menopause
- 3 Breast Lumps & Cancer
- 4 Breast Awareness & Breast Self-Exam
- 5 Osteoporosis
- 6 Premenstrual Syndrome
- 7 Urinary Tract Infections
- 8 Vaginal Infections
- 9 Tests & Exams



Reviewed and Approved by the Senior Medical Advisory Board



This Permafold® is not meant to take the place of expert medical care or treatment. Follow your doctor's or health care provider's advice.

1. Menstrual Cramps

Mild to severe pain in the lower abdomen a few days before and after the start of a menstrual period. Backache, fatigue, nausea, diarrhea, and/or headaches may occur.

Prevention/Self-Care

- Hold a heating pad or hot-water bottle on your abdomen or lower back.
- Take a warm bath.
- Gently massage your abdomen.
- Drink warm tea.
- Take an OTC* medicine for pain and swelling, such as ibuprofen or naproxen sodium. Acetaminophen can help the pain, too. *{Note: If under 19 years old, don't use aspirin, due to its link to Reye's Syndrome.}*
- Do mild exercises. Stretch. Do yoga. Walk. Bicycle.
- Limit stress as your period gets closer.
- For birth control, consider using the pill, the patch, or the Progestasert® IUD.

TIPS: Reasons to Call Doctor

- **The pain is extreme or you have had pain-free periods for years, but now have severe cramps.**
- **Menstrual cramps are not near your menstrual period.**
- **Cramps occurs with no menstrual period.**
- **Menstrual cramps are not helped with self-care.**

*Over-the-counter

2. Menopause

Menopause ("the change of life") is when a woman's menstrual periods have stopped for 1 whole year. This usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55.

Symptoms

- Hot flashes (sometimes with heart palpitations) and night sweats
- Irregular periods before they stop for life
- Vaginal dryness
- Bones become more brittle.
- Muscles lose some strength and tone.
- Skin begins to wrinkle.
- Being cranky. Mood swings. Lack of concentration. Memory problems.
- Loss of bladder tone, causing urine to leak with coughs, sneezes, etc.

Self-Care

For Hot Flashes and Night Sweats

- Keep cool. Lower the thermostat. Use air conditioning and/or fans.
- Wear lightweight, cotton clothes. Dress in layers. When you sleep, have changes of nightwear ready. Use a top sheet, not blankets.
- Limit caffeine and alcohol. Avoid rich and/or spicy foods. Don't eat a lot of food at one time.
- Drink cool water when you feel a hot flash coming on and before and after exercise. Avoid hot drinks.
- Unless you have a history of breast lumps or cancer, have 1 to 2 servings per day of soy foods, such as soybeans, soy milk, soy yogurt, tofu, and miso.
- Relax. Meditate.

Menopause can occur as early as age 35 or as late as 65 years of age. It can also result when both ovaries are removed by surgery.

Reasons to Call Doctor

- Heavy bleeding occurs with your periods. You bleed often between periods or you pass many blood clots.
- Symptoms are severe or occur often enough to keep you from doing daily tasks.
- Menstrual periods have begun again after stopping for 6 months.
- You want advice on: Taking hormone therapy; other medicines, vitamins, minerals, and herbal supplements for menopause symptoms; or medicines to prevent or treat osteoporosis.
- Side effects occur from taking medicines for menopause.

For Vaginal Dryness and Painful Intercourse

- Don't use deodorant soaps or scented products in the vaginal area.
- Use a water soluble lubricant, like K-Y Liquid®. Avoid oil or petroleum-based products.
- Use an estrogen cream, tablets, or a vaginal estrogen ring, as prescribed by your doctor.
- Stay sexually active.
- Don't use antihistamines, unless truly needed.

To Deal with Emotional Symptoms

- Do regular exercise. Manage stress. Meditate.
- Talk to women who have gone through menopause.
- Eat healthy. Check with your doctor about taking vitamin, mineral, and herbal supplements.

3. Breast Lumps & Cancer

Eighty to 90% of breast lumps are not cancerous.

Symptoms

- Lumps can be painless or painful; firm, rubbery, or tender to the touch. They can be near the skin surface of the breast and/or deep within the breast.
- A change occurs in the shape or contour of the breast. The skin on a breast thickens, dimples, puckers, or retracts.
- A nipple discharge is nonmilky or bloody. Nipples are inverted, crusty, or drawn into the chest.
- Breast pain or constant tenderness occurs all through the menstrual cycle.

TIPS: To Lower Your Risk for Breast Cancer

- **Get to and stay at a healthy weight.**
- **Do regular exercise.**
- **Eat a variety of whole grains and fresh fruits and vegetables.**
- **Limit alcohol to 1 drink per day, if any.**
- **Breast-feed your babies.**
- **Avoid unnecessary X-rays. Wear a lead apron when you get dental and other X-rays not of the chest.**

Talk to your doctor about your risk for breast cancer. Get advice on taking prescribed medicine, such as raloxifene, if at a high risk. Screening tests can help detect breast cancer at an early stage, when it is more likely to be treated with success.

Hang this card on a doorknob, mirror, etc. (This card is waterproof.)

Check for changes in how your breasts normally feel.

4. Breast Awareness & Breast Self-Exam

Breast awareness is knowing how your breasts normally look and feel and checking for changes. You can do this while you shower or get dressed. A breast self-exam (BSE) is a step-by-step method to examine your breasts. Ask your health care provider about the benefits and limitations of doing a BSE. If you choose to do a BSE, use the steps given below and on the next panel. At your next health exam, show your health care provider how you do a BSE.

BSE Steps

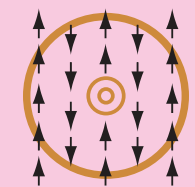
Examine your breasts during times of the month when they are not normally tender or swollen. For example, if you menstruate, the best time may be within 3 days after your period stops.

1. Lie down. Place a pillow under your right shoulder and put your right hand behind your head.



2. Move the pads of your left hand's 3 middle fingers, held flat, in small, circular motions as you start to feel your right breast tissue.

3. Use this circular motion in an up and down pattern as you check the entire breast area. This includes the area from as high up as your collarbone to as low as the ribs below your breast; and from your right side (imagine a line straight down from under your arm) across the breast to the middle of your chest bone.



Hang this card on a doorknob, mirror, etc. (This card is waterproof.)

NOTE:

Feel every part of the entire area with 3 different levels of pressure:

- **Light** – Feel the tissue closest to the skin.
- **Medium** – Feel a little deeper than the skin.
- **Firm** – Feel the tissue closest to your chest and ribs.

4. Squeeze the nipple gently. Check for a clear or bloody discharge.

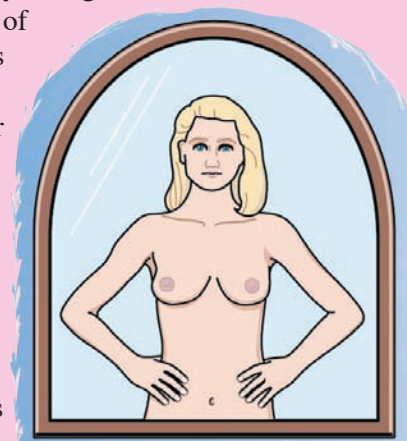
5. Repeat steps 1 to 4 for the left breast using the finger pads of your right hand.

6. Stand in front of a mirror. Press your hands firmly on your hips. Look for:

- Any changes in the size, shape, or contour of your breasts
- Puckering, scaling, or redness of the skin
- Nipple changes or discharge

7. Sit or stand. Raise your arm slightly. Examine each underarm area for lumps or changes.

If you find a lump or any change in the way your breasts normally look or feel, let your doctor or health care provider know right away. Most lumps are not cancer.



5. Osteoporosis

Often the first sign is a fracture of the hip, wrist, or spine. Symptoms include: Gradual loss of height. Stooped posture or “dowager’s” hump. Rounding of the shoulders. Back pain.

Prevention/Self-Care

- Take medication to prevent bone loss or treat osteoporosis, as advised by your doctor.
- Follow a diet rich in calcium and vitamin D. Take calcium and vitamin D supplements, as advised by your doctor.
- Do weight-bearing exercises, such as walking, 3 or more times a week. Do the exercises your doctor recommends.
- Don’t smoke. If you smoke, quit.
- Limit alcohol intake to 1 drink per day, if any.

TIPS:

Prevent falls. Use grab bars and safety mats in your tub or shower. Use handrails on stairs. Wear flat, sturdy, nonskid shoes. Use rugs with nonskid backs. Be careful if you have to walk on snow and ice.

Reasons to Call Doctor

- Constant pain occurs in your back, ribs, spine, or feet.
- You have a curved back (“dowager’s hump”).
- You want advice on medicines to prevent bone loss and to treat osteoporosis.

Reasons to Get Medical Care Fast

- You have a bone fracture with severe bleeding or any deformity at the fracture site.
- You have cold, blue skin under the fracture and/or numbness below the fracture.

6. Premenstrual Syndrome

With premenstrual syndrome (PMS), symptoms must occur anytime within 2 weeks before the menstrual period and go away shortly after the period begins.

Common symptoms are:

- Anxiety. Irritability. Panic attacks.
- Bloating in the abdomen
- Breast tenderness
- Depression. Fatigue. Mood swings.
- Feelings of hostility and anger.
- Food cravings (chocolate, sweet, and salty foods)
- Headache

Prevention/Self-Care

- Get emotional support.
- Do aerobic exercises. Swim. Walk. Bicycle.
- Eat carbohydrate rich foods, such as whole-grain breads and cereals, vegetables, and fruits.
- Limit or avoid caffeine, alcohol, and cigarettes for 2 weeks before your period is due.
- Limit salt, fat, and sugar.
- Rest. Take naps if you need to.
- Relax. Take a warm bath. Meditate. Do yoga.
- Manage stress.

Reasons to Call Doctor

- PMS symptoms make you unable to carry out daily tasks.
- You do not feel better after using Prevention/Self-Care.
- You want advice on medicines and supplements for PMS.

7. Urinary Tract Infections

Symptoms of a urinary tract infection (UTI): Blood in the urine. Pain or burning when you pass urine. Pain in the abdomen, back, or sides. Constant urge to urinate. Urinating often. Chills, fever, nausea, and/or vomiting. (You may not have any symptoms.)

Prevention/Self-Care

- Wipe from front to back after using the toilet.
- Drink at least 8 glasses of liquids a day.
- Empty your bladder as soon as you feel the urge.
- Wear cotton underwear and loose-fitting slacks.
- If you are prone to UTI’s, don’t take bubble baths.
- If you use a diaphragm, remove it within 8 hours after sex. Clean it after each use. Change tampons sooner than 8 hours.

TIPS: If you have a UTI:

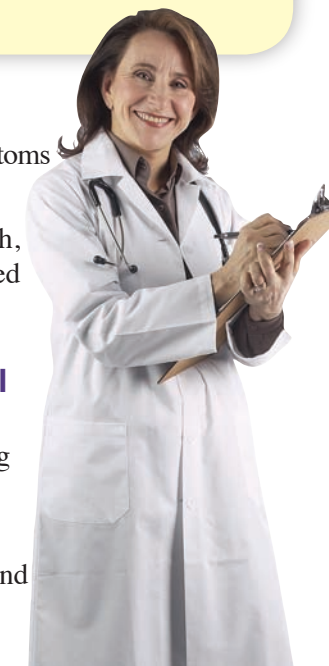
- **Rest. Drink plenty of liquids. Avoid alcohol, spicy foods, and coffee.**
- **Take an over-the-counter medicine for pain, such as Uristat® or ibuprofen.**

Reasons to Call Doctor

- You have one or more symptoms of a UTI listed above.
- Side effects, like a skin rash, occur after taking prescribed medicine for a UTI.

Reasons to Get Medical Care Fast

- You have fever and shaking chills, mid-back pain, and nausea or vomiting.
- You have UTI symptoms and you are pregnant.



8. Vaginal Infections

Symptoms

Itching, redness, burning and/or pain around the vagina. Thick, white (or thin, gray or white) discharge from the vagina. Burning and/or pain when you urinate or have sex. {**Note:** This could also be a symptom of a UTI. See topic 7.}

Prevention/Self-Care

- Keep the vagina as clean and dry as possible.
- Wipe from front to back after using the toilet.
- Wear cotton underwear and loose-fitting bottoms.
- Don’t use deodorant soaps, scented tampons, douches, feminine hygiene sprays.
- Eat well. Have foods, such as yogurt, with live cultures of “lactobacillus acidophilus.”



When you have a vaginal yeast infection:

- Use an OTC medication, such as Monistat®.
- Limit your intake of sugar and foods with sugar.

Reasons to Call Doctor

- Symptoms get worse or do not respond to Prevention/Self-Care.
- Vaginal infections occur often or come back within 2 months of treatment.
- You have a thin gray or milky white vaginal discharge that has an odor.

9. Tests & Exams*

Test	Ages 18-40	Ages 40-50	Ages 50+
Dental Checkup	Every 6 to 12 months		
Physical Exam	Every 5 years ages 18-29 Every 2-4 years ages 30-49		Every 1 to 2 years
Blood Pressure	Each office visit; at least every 2 years		
Vision Exam	Every 5 years ages 18-29 Every 2-4 years ages 30-49		Every 1 to 2 years age 65+
Chlamydia Screening	All sexually active women ages 24 and younger; ages 25+ if at increased risk		
Pap Test	At least every 3 years until age 65 or as advised		
Breast Exam by Doctor or Nurse†		Discuss with doctor	
Mammogram †		Every 2 years ages 50-74 or as advised	
Cholesterol Blood Test		Starting at age 45 (if at an increased risk for heart disease), or as advised	
Colorectal Cancer Screening			Ages 50 to 75
Osteoporosis Screening	Starting at age 65 (60 if at increased risk for fractures), as often as advised		

***Note:** Women should also be screened for alcohol misuse, depression, obesity, and tobacco use. If you are at an increased risk for an illness, tests may need to be done sooner or more often. Extra tests (e.g., screening for diabetes, glaucoma) may be needed. **Follow your doctor’s advice for tests and exams.**

† Screening guidelines vary with different health groups. For ages 40-49 and 74+, discuss your breast cancer risk and the pros and cons of these screening tests with your doctor or health care provider.

For More Information, Contact:

National Women’s Health Information Center
800.994.9662 • www.womenshealth.gov

Get Free Health Information, from:
www.HealthyLearn.com

© 2010, 17th ed., American Institute for Preventive Medicine, Farmington Hills, Michigan • www.HealthyLife.com