

Survey Explores Menopause Knowledge Gaps in Black Women

Many Black women expressed a need for greater culturally grounded education about menopause beginning early in life.

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Many Black women struggle to navigate perimenopause and menopause due to a lack of adequate information, discrimination and more, according to preliminary findings from a large cross-sectional online survey of U.S.-based Black women ages 30 to 65 [released by the Black Women's Health Imperative](#) (BWHI).

While [menopause](#) has gained attention in mainstream culture over time, BWHI aims to take a deeper look into the cultural nuances impacting Black women's experiences with perimenopause and menopause.

The [menopause survey](#) is a cornerstone of BWHI's national initiative [Power in the Pause](#), which supports programs, [advocacy](#), research and policy efforts to reduce stigma and improve the standard of care for women during midlife.

Menopause is a point in time 12 months after a woman's last period. Menopause is not a disease or disorder about menopause but rather a normal life stage. The years leading up to menopause—during which women may experience changes in their monthly cycles or [vasomotor symptoms](#), such as [hot flashes](#) and [night sweats](#)—are referred to as the menopausal transition or perimenopause. The menopausal transition affects each woman uniquely and in various ways.

The survey included more than 1,500 U.S.-based Black women ages 30 to 65. According to the release, preliminary findings show:

- 52% of respondents said they did not know which medical recommendations to follow.
- 46% said they did not have adequate information to manage their symptoms.

- 43% reported being discriminated against or treated unfairly when seeking health care.
- 42% reported struggling with depression during this stage of life.

“This survey lays bare what too many of us already know: Black women are navigating menopause with too little support, too few resources and not enough trusted information,” Joy Calloway, MBA, president and CEO of BWHI, said in the release.

Survey respondents also reported [experiencing symptoms](#) for more than nine years, much longer than many expect. What’s more, women described night sweats, brain fog and fatigue as more disruptive compared with hot flashes.

The menopausal transition most often begins between ages 45 and 55. It usually lasts about seven years but can be as long as 14 years. The duration can depend on lifestyle factors (e.g., smoking), age of onset and race and ethnicity.

About 66% of survey respondents expressed a need for greater culturally grounded education beginning in their 30s. Participants also expressed a desire for safe spaces to share their experiences and reduce stigma surrounding menopause.

“The women who participated in this study represent an educated, insured and professionally active group—yet the data reveal profound gaps in care and understanding,” said Ifeoma Udoh, PhD, executive vice president of policy and research at BWHI. “As a public health researcher, I see this as a wake-up call for the field. We need deeper, ongoing research to understand the biological, cultural and systemic factors shaping Black women’s experiences of menopause. Only then can we design interventions that truly meet their needs.”

To read more, click [#Menopause](#) or read Real Health’s [Basics on Menopause](#). It reads in part:

What causes menopause?

Menopause is a normal part of aging triggered by a decrease in estrogen. Menopause can also be caused by a hysterectomy or surgical removal of the ovaries, which produce hormones. If you have surgery to remove your uterus or ovaries and are not taking hormones, you will experience symptoms of menopause immediately.

What are the symptoms of menopause?

Estrogen is used by many parts of a woman's body. As levels of estrogen decrease, you could have various symptoms. Many women experience mild symptoms that can be treated by lifestyle changes, such as avoiding caffeine or carrying a portable fan. Some women don't require any treatment at all, but for others, symptoms can be more severe. The severity of symptoms varies greatly around the world and by race and ethnicity.

Here are the most common changes you might notice at midlife, though it should be noted that some of these may be part of aging rather than directly related to menopause:

Changes in your period. This might be what you notice first. Your periods may no longer be regular. They may be shorter or last longer. You might bleed more or less than usual. These are all normal changes, but to make sure there isn't a problem, see your doctor if:

- Your periods happen very close together;
- You have heavy bleeding;
- You have spotting;
- Your periods last more than a week;
- Your periods resume after no bleeding for more than a year.

Vasomotor symptoms (VMS), such as hot flashes and night sweats. Hormonal shifts, such as decreasing estrogen, can change nerve cells in the hypothalamus, a region of the brain that controls hormone production and temperature. VMS can result from these changes.

Many women have hot flashes, which can last for many years after menopause. A hot flash is a sudden feeling of heat in the upper part or all of your body. Your face and neck may become flushed. Red blotches may appear on your chest, back and arms. Heavy sweating and cold shivering may follow. Hot flashes can be very mild or strong enough to wake you up (the latter are called night sweats). Most hot flashes last between 30 seconds and 10 minutes. They can happen several times an hour, a few times a day or just once or twice a week.