

Primary ovarian insufficiency (POI) or early menopause and the risk to bone health

Department of Gynaecology

Information for Patients

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What is primary ovarian insufficiency (POI) or early menopause?

Menopause is when your periods stop due to lower hormone levels. This usually happens between the ages of 45 and 55.

If you stop your period between age 40 to 45 then it is called an early menopause

If you stop having your periods before the age of 40 this is called primary ovarian insufficiency. This affects roughly 1 out of every 100 women under the age of 40 years.

What are the effects of POI or early menopause on my health?

If your low oestrogen hormones in the body are not treated, this can have long term effects on your health including:

- Heart disease
- A risk of bone thinning, called osteoporosis. If this occurs, there is a higher risk of breaking bones that is fragility fractures. This can result in pain, disability, or rarely even shorten the length of your life.

The earlier we see women with early menopause for the above risks and take the right action, we can lower the risk of long term effects on our health.

This information sheet focus on the bone health only.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

What is the treatment to protect my bones?

For most women diagnosed with POI or early menopause we advise that you take hormone replacement therapy (HRT) until at least the natural age of menopause. This is about 51 years in the UK. The idea is to replace the hormones that your body would have naturally been producing. This would reduce the risk of the long term health conditions mentioned above.

- If you still have a womb, then it is best to take 2 hormones called oestrogen and progesterone.
- If you have had your womb removed by surgery (hysterectomy) then usually you will only need oestrogen.

There are lots of options for HRT such as using gels, sprays, patches or tablets.

For some women, HRT is not suitable. This can be due to a significant medical history, for example, in a women with a previous history of hormone sensitive breast cancer. In this case, bone health is checked closely. If osteoporosis is found non-hormonal treatments can be started

Do I need any tests?

You may have:

- blood tests to check that you are absorbing enough oestrogen from your HRT to protect your bones well. Your vitamin D level may also be checked as this vitamin is important in bone health.
- a bone density scan called a DEXA scan. This is done at regular intervals to check for osteoporosis. This health condition usually has no symptoms until a bone breaks. A DEXA scan is very useful in helping to screen and check your bones over time.

Are there any lifestyle changes that can help?

A healthy weight:

Maintaining a healthy weight is essential. Being either under or overweight can have negative effects on your bones.

Exercise:

Regular weight bearing and muscle strengthening exercises are key to keeping your bones strong. Exercises could vary from simple walks, to high impact jumping. Over time adding in weight lifting or press ups can help further.

Diet:

A balanced diet rich in calcium and vitamin D is also vital. Foods rich in calcium include

- dairy products,
- almonds and
- dry fruits.

Most Vitamin D can be made from sunlight. Being out in the sun is important.

From March to September being out in the sun for around 10 minutes should be enough for most people to make enough vitamin D.

From September to March taking a low dose supplement of 400 units or 10 micrograms of vitamin D daily can make up for the lack of sunlight in these months.

Some foods that contain vitamin D include

- oily fish like salmon or mackerel,
- eggs and
- fortified breads/ cereals.

Try to get your 5-a day from different coloured fruits and vegetables as this makes sure that you are getting the right vitamins, nutrients and minerals.

Limiting the amount of caffeine you have can also be helpful.

Smoking and alcohol:

Stopping smoking and limiting the amount of alcohol you have to less than 14 units in a week are both important in maintaining bone health and protecting your long term health.

A unit of alcohol is equal to half a pint of beer.

If you need help to stop smoking, there are clinics that offer support on the NHS that are easily accessible. Please ask your local GP surgery for more information.

Where can I find more information?

For more information please visit [Royal Osteoporosis Society - Osteoporosis Charity UK \(theros.org.uk\)](https://www.theros.org.uk) for resources and a free helpline for support.

Contact details

If you have any further queries or need more advice or support please contact your GP.

A space for some notes

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اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
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Previous reference:

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