

Nature & Science: Choosing Your Path Through Menopause

A Clear Guide to Natural
and Medical Hormone
Therapies — And What
Actually Works

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Disclaimer

The information provided in this book is for educational and informational purposes only. It is not intended to diagnose, treat, or cure any medical conditions. The content is based on the author's personal experience, research, and insights into menopause, but it should not be considered as medical advice.

Before making any changes to your health regimen, diet, exercise routine, or starting any new treatments, supplements, or therapies, you should consult with a healthcare professional or a qualified specialist. Every woman's experience with menopause is unique, and it is important to seek personalized advice that best suits your individual needs and health status.

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Always prioritize your health and well-being, and remember that no book or guide can replace the guidance of a medical professional in managing your health.

PART I GETTING ORIENTED



1 Introduction – When Science Meets Experience

I'm a biologist by training, and until recently, I held a high-level management role at one of the world's most powerful tech companies — one of the so-called “Magnificent 7.” I was leading at the top, thriving in complexity, and thriving on challenges. I've spent my career analyzing systems, spotting patterns, and backing decisions with data.

And then, one day, my body slammed on the brakes. It started with **heart palpitations** — violent, terrifying episodes where it felt like my chest was going to explode. I thought I was dying. The cardiologist told me everything looked normal. “It's psychological,” they said. “Stress. Maybe burnout.” But something didn't add up.

I wasn't under more pressure than usual. In fact, I'd been through far worse. And unlike friends of mine who had experienced real burnout, I didn't feel drained of energy or ambition. I still had an enormous drive to push forward. But **my body was screaming ‘STOP’**.

I stepped away from my role — a role I loved — because I genuinely feared I was dying. And even after months away from the grind, with no work stress left in sight... I still felt awful.

Then one day it hit me: **this was perimenopause**. The signs had been there, hidden under labels like “stress,” “aging,” or “emotional exhaustion.” But once I started researching the hormonal transition that affects half the global population, everything began to make sense.

I changed my diet. I adjusted my lifestyle. I stopped fighting my body and started supporting it. And slowly, I got myself back — **not just physically, but mentally, professionally, and emotionally**.

I'm not a doctor, and I don't pretend to be. But I am a scientist. I know how to ask the right questions, dig into

research, and connect the dots when no one else seems to be looking at the whole picture.

And that's what this book is about.

It's not a medical manual, but it is a rigorously researched, science-backed guide written by someone who's lived through the confusion — and come out stronger on the other side. I've read the studies, interviewed the experts, fact-checked the claims, and learned from countless women walking the same path.

As science evolves, so does our understanding — which means some information in this book may eventually become outdated or even proven wrong. This book reflects the best science available today, but I welcome correction. If I get something wrong, I want to know — because this isn't about being right, it's about being honest. It's about clarity, truth, and real solutions. We all deserve that.

That's also why I launched a podcast and youtube channel **RESET By Valerie**, to share real-time updates on new research, interview leading scientists, and offer practical feedback on what I've tried myself to keep menopause symptoms in check. It's a space to stay current, stay connected, and stay supported — together.

My goal is simple: **to understand what menopause truly is**, in all its hormonal, neurological, emotional, and physical dimensions — and to share practical tools to navigate it. Tools that help you **feel like yourself again**. Tools that give you power back.

Because you're not broken.

You're not crazy.

And you're definitely not alone.

Let's figure this out — together.

2 Setting the Stage – Menopause and Its Impact on Women's Health

Sophie was 45 when her world quietly began to unravel. It started with small things: a forgotten grocery list, a burst of irritation at her teenage son for leaving a plate in the sink, waking up drenched in sweat despite the cool air in the room. She brushed it off. Stress, she thought. Maybe she was just working too hard.

But then came the heart palpitations, the crushing fatigue, and the sudden anxiety that gripped her without warning. Some days, she barely recognized herself — a fog had settled over her thoughts, and her once-sharp mind felt distant and dull. She went to her doctor, desperate for answers.

After a quick exam and some routine bloodwork, the doctor smiled politely. “Everything looks normal,” he said. “It’s probably just stress. Maybe try some yoga or take a break. You’re still too young for menopause.” And that was it. She was sent home — exhausted, disoriented, and unheard.

Sophie’s story isn’t unusual. In fact, it’s disturbingly common. Menopause, and the years leading up to it — known as perimenopause — affect half the population, yet it remains one of the most under-discussed and misunderstood health transitions a woman goes through. Symptoms can begin as early as the late 30s or early 40s and last well into the 50s and beyond. And these aren’t just “mood swings” or the occasional hot flash. For many women, the hormonal rollercoaster of menopause can have profound physical, emotional, and cognitive impacts.

What Exactly Is Menopause?

Medically, menopause is defined as the point in time when a woman has gone 12 consecutive months without a menstrual period. But the process leading up to this moment — perimenopause — can span 5 to 10 years and is often the most turbulent phase. Hormones such as estrogen and progesterone begin to fluctuate unpredictably, affecting nearly every system in the body.

Menopause isn't a disease. It's a natural biological transition. But that doesn't mean it's easy — or that it should be minimized.

Common (and Often Dismissed) Symptoms

Here's the reality: menopause can impact sleep, mood, memory, heart health, bone density, skin, weight, libido, and more. Some of the most common symptoms include:

- **Hot flashes and night sweats**
- **Brain fog and memory lapses**
- **Anxiety and depression**
- **Fatigue and insomnia**
- **Vaginal dryness and pain during sex**
- **Joint and muscle pain**
- **Weight gain, especially around the abdomen**
- **Loss of libido**
- **Palpitations and dizziness**

These aren't mild inconveniences. They can interfere with daily life, relationships, work, and self-esteem. Yet many women are told, like Sophie, that what they're experiencing is "normal" and that they should simply cope.

Why This Chapter — and This Book — Matters

For too long, menopause has been shrouded in silence or dismissed as just a part of “getting older.” But understanding what’s happening in your body — and realizing that you’re not alone — is the first step in reclaiming power and finding real solutions.

In this book, we’ll break the taboo. We’ll explore not just the biological facts, but the emotional and social realities of menopause. You’ll hear the voices of other women, learn what the science really says, and discover strategies that can help you thrive during this major life transition.

Sophie’s story is only the beginning. There is so much more to uncover — and so much hope on the other side.

3 Menopause Is Not ‘Reverse Puberty’ — It’s Serious, and It Deserves Respect

You may have heard people — even some doctors — describe menopause as *“like puberty in reverse.”* On the surface, it sounds harmless enough: puberty is when hormones turn on, and menopause is when they shut off. Simple, right?

Except it’s not.

This comparison is misleading at best — and damaging at worst. It minimizes the **real, systemic, and sometimes life-disrupting** nature of what happens to a woman’s body, brain, and emotions during this transition.

Because menopause isn’t just the end of fertility.

It’s the **rewiring of nearly every system in your body.**

Why the ‘Reverse Puberty’ Myth Fails

Let’s break it down:

- **Puberty** brings an increase in hormones, a buildup of resilience, and a sense of forward momentum.
- **Menopause**, on the other hand, comes with **hormonal withdrawal**, increased **vulnerability to disease**, and often a sharp decline in **energy, cognition, and mood** — especially if unaddressed.

The symptoms aren’t just annoying. They can be **debilitating**:

- Heart palpitations that mimic panic attacks
- Brain fog that affects your ability to work
- Vaginal atrophy that affects intimacy and quality of life
- Hot flashes that disrupt sleep for years
- Bone loss that silently increases fracture risk
- A 3x higher risk of depression and anxiety

That’s not just puberty in reverse. That’s a whole-body transformation — and it deserves to be taken seriously.

It's Not Just Hormones — It's Neurological, Metabolic, and Emotional

Estrogen and progesterone don't just regulate reproduction. They also:

- Protect neurons in the brain
- Regulate inflammation
- Balance cortisol and insulin
- Support collagen in the skin, joints, and blood vessels
- Influence serotonin, dopamine, and GABA — your feel-good neurotransmitters

So when estrogen drops, **everything shifts** — not just your cycle.

Women may experience:

- **Cognitive decline** or even early Alzheimer's risk
- **Increased cardiovascular risk**
- **Higher rates of autoimmune issues**
- **Loss of muscle mass and bone strength**

Would you call that “reverse puberty”? Probably not.

Why This Language Matters

When menopause is minimized, women are gaslit.

We're told:

“It's just a phase.”

“Everyone goes through it.”

“You just need to breathe through it.”

“It's natural — don't overreact.”

But nature doesn't mean easy.

And “common” doesn't mean **non-serious**.

Calling menopause “*reverse puberty*” is a soft way of saying: “*Get over it.*”

And we're done with that.

What Women Actually Need

- **Recognition** that this is a real medical transition — not just a lifestyle inconvenience
- **Access to testing and personalized care** (not a one-size-fits-all shrug)

- **Safe conversations** about symptoms, treatment, and support
- **Updated medical education** that includes menopause as a standard focus, not a side note
- **Cultural respect** for women in midlife — not invisibility

The Takeaway

Menopause is **not reverse puberty**. It's not cute. It's not funny. It's **not something to just ride out and "deal with."** It is a biological, emotional, and neurological transformation that deserves **attention, research, respect, and real support**.

So the next time someone compares it to puberty — feel free to correct them.

Not because we're sensitive.

But because we're done being dismissed.

4 Understanding Perimenopause and Menopause — What Every Woman Should Know

If you're a woman in your 40s and starting to feel "off," you're not alone — and you're not imagining things. You may be entering **perimenopause**, the natural transition that leads up to menopause.

But what exactly is happening in your body? Why does it feel so intense for some women? And how can you prepare and protect your well-being as things shift?

Let's break it down in a way that's clear, practical, and real.

What Is Perimenopause?

Perimenopause is the **hormonal rollercoaster phase** that starts years before menopause. Your estrogen and progesterone levels start to fluctuate — sometimes wildly — and that affects everything from your periods to your sleep, mood, and energy.

