

## Menopause and Perimenopause

In our youth-oriented society, women are often fearful of any label that contains the word "menopause", because it is often presented as a disease or a condition associated with old age. The truth is that for many women, menopause and the stage of life it represents, is very positive. They no longer fear being pregnant and thus have more sexual freedom and they often have more time and means to enjoy life. A recent Harris poll found that women who turn 50 today view themselves as younger than their parents did at that age. The word "menopause" comes from two Greek words for "month" and "cessation". Menopause is defined by a single event: a woman's last menstrual period, which happens either when a woman's ovaries are removed by surgery (surgical menopause); destroyed by radiation treatments, chemotherapy, or use of some other drugs (induced menopause); or when her ovaries no longer make enough estrogen to produce a menstrual cycle (natural menopause). It takes one year of waiting after the last period to confirm that its menopause and not just a very irregular period. Post menopause signifies the years beyond menopause. Having a hysterectomy (surgical removal of the uterus) will stop menstruation, but it does not cause menopause unless the ovaries are also removed. Even though women are living longer than ever before, the age of natural menopause hasn't changed much over the past few centuries. It is still 51.4 years, according to the Journal of Clinical Epidemiology by Kato I, et al., 1998. But menopause anytime between the ages of 40 and 55 is normal. Often it occurs around the same time as in one's mother or sister. Premature menopause occurs before the age 40 and that happens to about 2 percent women. Perimenopause literally means around menopause - the month and years (up to 10 or 12) preceding menopause plus one year after menopause. Most doctors pertain to perimenopause as "being in menopause". Right now, the baby boomers, those numerous numbers of individuals born in the 1940s and 1950s, are reaching 50. The sample people who wanted to change the world in the 1960s are themselves starting to change. Each day, 4,000 American women become menopausal and their numbers continue to increase: from an estimated 28.7 million women older 55 in 1990, to 31.2 million in 2000, to a projected 45.9 million by the year 2020. Another 35 million women are currently going through perimenopause. Increasing numbers of books and articles are being published about menopause and more and more studies are being aimed at women and women's health at this phase of life. The result is that menopause, often referred to as the change of life and is itself going through a change. There are important issues for a woman to understand and address as she completes her reproductive years. In fact, if a woman reaches 50 without contracting heart disease or cancer, she is expected to live to be 92. Add this to the fact that the fastest-growing age group in America is the 100-plus-year-olds and it becomes clear that menopause is merely the next phase in a long life, complete with its benefits and its challenges. Realizing that menopause is a natural and inevitable next phase of life is valuable. It allows a person to stop asking the question "How do I stop aging?" and begin asking the question "How do I remain graceful throughout life's challenges?"

## About the Author

For Aquinas, there are two key features of the natural law, features the. The fundamental thesis affirmed here by Aquinas is that the natural.

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