

BODY AFTER FORTY · FREE GUIDE

YOUR BODY AFTER 40, EXPLAINED

# Why do I look different?

Thinner hair. Dry skin. A belly out of nowhere. The changes nobody warned you about, the real reason behind each one, and what actually helps.

7 CHANGES · WHAT HELPS · WHAT TO SKIP · TESTS TO ASK FOR

## START HERE

# It's not just age. And it's not your fault.

Something's off when you look in the mirror. Your hair's thinner. Your skin feels tight. Your jeans won't close, and you're eating the same as always. Maybe someone told you it's just getting older.

A lot of it isn't just age. For many women, these changes are perimenopause: the years before your periods stop, when your hormones start shifting. And most women are never told. At one UK menopause clinic, a woman wrote that she tried creams for about 18 months before realizing it might be perimenopause. In her words: *"no-one tells us!"*

So we're telling you. Plainly, with the research behind it, and without trying to sell you a cream.

1

**Read page 3 first**

Two minutes on what's actually happening inside.

2

**Find your changes on pages 4 to 10**

Skip the ones that aren't you. Each page says why, what helps, and what to skip.

3

**Read page 11 before you buy anything else**

It could save you hundreds.

4

**Start the 7-day plan on page 13**

One small thing a day. Tick them off on your phone or on paper.

**Inside**

- |                                       |                          |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. What's going on                    | 7. Your energy           |
| 2. Your belly and shape               | 8. Your mood and memory  |
| 3. Your hair                          | 9. Save your money       |
| 4. Your skin                          | 10. The tests to ask for |
| 5. Chin hairs, spots and a tired face | 11. Your 7-day start     |
| 6. Your sleep                         | 12. Sources              |

## WHAT'S GOING ON

# Your hormones aren't just dropping. They're bouncing.

In perimenopause, estrogen doesn't fall in a neat line. It goes up and down, sometimes a lot, for several years before your periods stop. That's why you can feel and look fine one month and not the next.

**When**

Menopause usually happens between 45 and 55, and it can be earlier. Perimenopause is the stretch before it, often starting in your 40s.

**What estrogen does for your looks**

It helps your skin hold water and make collagen, keeps fat on your hips rather than your belly, and supports your hair's growing phase. It helps steady your mood and sleep too.

**The finish line**

Menopause is the point when you haven't had a period for 12 months. Everything before it is perimenopause.

## So why does it show on the outside?

Because estrogen does a lot of quiet work on how you look. When it starts to swing and fall, you see it in the mirror, in photos, and in how your clothes fit. The good news is that a lot of what helps is in your hands: what you eat, how you move, how you sleep, and knowing when to ask a doctor.

**This isn't you letting yourself go. Your body's chemistry is changing, and it needs different things now.**

Some of these changes can also come from low iron or your thyroid, which are easy to test. Page 12 shows you what to ask for.

## CHANGE 1 · YOUR BELLY AND SHAPE

# The scales say the same. Your jeans don't.

Your waist got thicker. Your clothes pull across the middle. Maybe you went from pear-shaped to apple-shaped. And the number on the scales has barely moved.

**WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON**

A big US study called SWAN followed thousands of women through menopause. When perimenopause starts, the speed women gain fat roughly doubles, while their muscle starts to shrink. Weight doesn't jump, because you're swapping muscle for fat. Your shape changes before the scales notice.

With less estrogen around, more of that fat settles on your belly instead of your hips and thighs.

**That's why the scales lie. Measure your waist and notice how your jeans fit instead.**

**WHAT HELPS**

- Protein at every meal, about a palm-sized portion: eggs, fish, chicken, beans, Greek yogurt.
- Strength moves 2 or 3 times a week, plus walking most days. In a review of 101 trials, exercise shrank belly fat and waists in women after menopause. Strength builds muscle; walking burns more fat. You need both.
- More fiber: vegetables, beans, lentils, oats.
- Sleep. Short sleep makes people eat more. In one trial, a few hundred calories more a day.

**SAVE YOUR MONEY**

- Belly pills, teas and "meno belly" supplements. No good evidence they shift belly fat.
- Crash diets. They cost you muscle, and losing weight fast can make your hair shed.

**See a doctor if** your tummy feels swollen or bloated most days (12 or more times a month), or your belly grew fast. It's worth checking.

## CHANGE 2 · YOUR HAIR

# More in the plughole. Less on your head.

Your part looks wider in photos. Your ponytail feels thinner in your hand. There's more hair on your brush than there used to be.

**WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON**

As estrogen falls, fewer of your hairs are in their growing phase at the same time, so your hair looks thinner, often on top and at the front. At one UK menopause clinic, more than half the women had thinning hair.

But check the easy-to-fix causes first. Heavier periods in your 40s can leave you low in iron, and more hair coming out when you brush or wash is one of the signs. An underactive thyroid causes hair loss too. So can stress, illness or losing weight fast.

**Ask your doctor for your ferritin (iron stores) and thyroid. It's quick, and it means you're not guessing.**

**WHAT HELPS**

- Protein at every meal. Hair is made of it.
- Iron-rich food: red meat, beans, lentils, dark green vegetables.
- No crash diets. Fast weight loss is a common trigger for shedding.
- Minoxidil, a treatment you put on your scalp, can help with female pattern hair loss. It only works while you keep using it. Ask a pharmacist or doctor first.

**SAVE YOUR MONEY**

- "Thickening" shampoos to regrow hair. They make the hair you have look fuller. They don't grow new hair.
- Hair vitamins, unless a blood test shows you're actually low in something.

**See a doctor if** your hair is coming out in patches, falling out fast, or you're worried. Hair loss from a medical cause usually stops or grows back once it's treated.

## CHANGE 3 · YOUR SKIN

# Your skin isn't failing. It's running low on estrogen.

Tight by lunchtime. Itchy at night. Creams you've used for years suddenly sting. A crepey neck that seemed to appear overnight.

## WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON

Estrogen helps your skin hold water, make oil and build collagen, the protein that keeps it firm. After menopause, skin loses about 2% of its collagen every year for around 15 years. It also gets thinner and less springy.

At one UK menopause clinic, about three in four women had dry or itchy skin, and nearly half were dealing with it alone without asking a doctor.

**Daily sunscreen is the best-proven way to look younger. In a trial of 903 adults, people who used it every day had 24% less visible skin aging over four and a half years.**

## WHAT HELPS

- Sunscreen on your face every day, even when it's cloudy. Keep it next to your toothbrush.
- A gentle cleanser and a richer moisturizer, put on while your skin is still a little damp.
- Vitamin C from food, plus protein. In a study of 4,025 women aged 40 to 74, more vitamin C from food was linked to fewer wrinkles and less dryness.
- If you smoke, stopping is one of the best things you can do for your skin.

## SAVE YOUR MONEY

- Collagen powders. In a 2025 review of 23 trials, the benefits disappeared when only high-quality studies, or ones not paid for by industry, were counted.
- Pricey "menopause" creams. They can make skin feel nicer, but no cream can replace estrogen.

**See a doctor if** the itching is bad, you have a rash, or your skin changed suddenly along with other symptoms.

## CHANGE 4 · YOUR FACE

# Chin hairs, new spots, and a face that looks tired.

A wiry hair on your chin that wasn't there last month. Spots, like you're 15 again. A face in photos that looks more tired than you feel.

**WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON**

As estrogen falls, the balance between estrogen and testosterone shifts. Around half of women grow some new facial hair after menopause. Some women find spots come back too.

Thinner, drier skin shows tiredness more, and broken sleep (page 8) shows up on your face first.

**WHAT HELPS**

- Tweezing, threading or waxing are fine for a few hairs. Laser or IPL are options if there are more.
- For spots, be gentle: a mild cleanser, no scrubbing, and don't pick.
- Sunscreen and a richer moisturizer (page 6) help a tired-looking face more than any eye cream.
- Sleep and water. They show up on your face first.

**SAVE YOUR MONEY**

- Harsh scrubs and strong acne products made for teenage oily skin. Your skin is drier now.

**See a doctor if** hair appears suddenly or there's a lot of it, or your spots are painful or leave scars. A pharmacist or doctor can help.

## CHANGE 5 · YOUR SLEEP

# Wide awake at 3am, again.

Falling asleep is fine. Then 3am arrives and you're staring at the ceiling, hot, with tomorrow's to-do list running through your head.

**WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON**

Problems sleeping and night sweats are common menopause symptoms. Shifting hormones make sleep lighter and easier to break.

Bad sleep doesn't just make you tired. It shows on your face, and it makes you eat more the next day.

**WHAT HELPS**

- A cool bedroom and light layers you can throw off.
- Get up at the same time every day, even after a bad night.
- Protein and fiber at dinner rather than a big bowl of plain pasta.
- Alcohol earlier and less. It breaks up sleep in the second half of the night.

**SAVE YOUR MONEY**

- Scrolling when you wake at night. Keep the lights low and the phone down.

**See a doctor if** you're waking most nights and it's wearing you down, or night sweats are soaking your sheets.

## CHANGE 6 · YOUR ENERGY

# Tired before the day has even started.

You sleep, you wake up, and you're already tired. By 3pm you could lie down on the floor.

**WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON**

Broken sleep adds up. But tiredness in your 40s is often something else too. Heavier periods are a very common cause of low iron, and low iron makes you tired, short of breath on the stairs, and can thin your hair.

An underactive thyroid can cause tiredness, weight gain, dry skin and hair loss, so it's easy to mistake for perimenopause.

**If you're exhausted most days for a few weeks, don't guess. Ask for a blood test (page 12).**

**WHAT HELPS**

- A breakfast with protein in it, like eggs or Greek yogurt.
- Daylight in the morning, even ten minutes outside.
- A short walk. It often gives you more energy than it takes.
- Coffee and tea in the morning only, so they don't steal tonight's sleep.

**SAVE YOUR MONEY**

- "Energy" supplements and tonics before you know what's actually wrong.

**See a doctor if** you've been exhausted most days for more than a few weeks, or your periods are very heavy.

## CHANGE 7 · YOUR MOOD AND MEMORY

# Snappy, anxious, foggy. And not like you.

You snap at people you love, then feel guilty. You worry about things that never bothered you. You walk into a room and forget why.

## WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON

Mood changes, anxiety and problems with memory and concentration are all common menopause symptoms. Estrogen affects the brain chemicals that keep your mood steady.

For most women the brain fog is a phase. In the SWAN study, memory dipped a little before menopause, then picked up again afterward.

## WHAT HELPS

- Move your body most days. It's one of the best-tested ways to lift a low mood.
- Less alcohol, especially if you wake up anxious the next day.
- Write things down: lists, phone reminders. It isn't cheating.
- Tell the people at home what's going on, so the snapping isn't a mystery.

## SAVE YOUR MONEY

- Waiting it out alone if it's getting in the way of your life. Treatments help many women, including HRT and talking therapy.

**See a doctor if** your mood is affecting your work or relationships. If you ever have thoughts of harming yourself, get help today.

SAVE YOUR MONEY

# Before you buy anything else, read this.

The menopause aisle is full of promises. Here’s what the evidence actually says, and where your money does more good.

| THE THING                            | WHAT THE EVIDENCE SAYS                                                                                                                                      | SPEND IT ON THIS INSTEAD                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| “Menopause” supplements              | In September 2026, the UK consumer group Which? tested 26. None were good enough to recommend, and a supermarket multivitamin costing 6p a day did as well. | A basic multivitamin if you want one. UK advice is 10 micrograms of vitamin D a day, especially in autumn and winter. |
| Belly pills and teas                 | No good evidence they shift belly fat. US regulators have acted against misleading menopause claims.                                                        | Walking shoes, and protein food.                                                                                      |
| Collagen powders                     | The benefits disappeared in independent, high-quality studies (2025 review of 23 trials).                                                                   | Sunscreen and vitamin C from food.                                                                                    |
| Hair vitamins and thickening shampoo | Shampoo makes hair look fuller but grows nothing. Vitamins only help if you’re low.                                                                         | A blood test for iron and thyroid.                                                                                    |
| Pricey menopause creams              | They can feel lovely. They can’t replace estrogen.                                                                                                          | A plain, rich moisturizer and a daily SPF.                                                                            |
| Strict fasting plans                 | Not required. No trial shows fasting beats simply eating a bit less for women our age, and many find it hard to keep up.                                    | Regular meals with protein and fiber.                                                                                 |

Thinking about a supplement or medicine? Check with a pharmacist or doctor first, because some can interact with what you already take.

## THE TESTS TO ASK FOR

# Don't guess. Ask.

If you have thinning hair, tiredness, or weight gain that doesn't make sense, a simple blood test can rule out the common, fixable causes.

**Ferritin**

Your iron stores. Ask for the actual number, not just whether you're anemic. You can be low in iron stores without being anemic, and some studies link that to hair shedding.

**Full blood count**

Checks for anemia, which heavy periods often cause. It can leave you tired, breathless and pale.

**Thyroid**

An underactive thyroid can cause tiredness, weight gain, dry skin and hair loss. Easy to test, easy to miss.

## What to say

## FOR HAIR OR TIREDNESS

**"My hair has been thinning and I'm tired all the time. Could we check my ferritin and my thyroid?"**

## FOR THE BIGGER PICTURE

**"I think these changes might be perimenopause. Can we talk about what's going on and what my options are?"**

## WHEN RESULTS COME BACK

**"Could you tell me my actual ferritin level, not just whether it's normal?"**

## IF YOU FEEL BRUSHED OFF

**"I understand. But this is affecting my life, and I'd like it written in my notes that I asked."**

**Seeing your doctor soon?** Our Doctor's Kit has a 3-month symptom tracker, a one-page summary to hand your doctor, and what to say if you feel brushed off. [Get it in our shop](#)

Blood tests often can't confirm perimenopause, because hormones swing from day to day. If you're over 45, doctors usually go by your symptoms. That's why writing them down helps. Use our free checklist at [bodyafterforty.online/free-checklist](https://bodyafterforty.online/free-checklist).

## YOUR 7-DAY START

# One small thing a day.

No plan to overhaul your life. Just seven small things that work with your body as it is now. Tick them off as you go.

- ☐ **Day 1.** Have protein at breakfast: eggs, Greek yogurt, or beans on toast.
- ☐ **Day 2.** Put sunscreen on your face before you leave the house. Leave it by your toothbrush.
- ☐ **Day 3.** Ten minutes of strength at home: sit-to-stand from a chair, wall push-ups, step-ups on the bottom stair.
- ☐ **Day 4.** Walk for 20 to 30 minutes, at a pace where you can talk but not sing.
- ☐ **Day 5.** Book a blood test, or write down your questions for the doctor.
- ☐ **Day 6.** Swap one evening drink for something else, and go to bed 30 minutes earlier.
- ☐ **Day 7.** Measure your waist and write it below. Check it again in 4 weeks, not on the scales.

My waist today

In 4 weeks

The change I most want to work on

**Small and steady beats a big plan you quit on day 4.**

## PASS IT ON

## Know a woman who needs this?

If this helped, send it to a friend. Chances are she's going through the same thing and thinks she's the only one. This guide is free to share.

Send her here

**[bodyafterforty.online/free-guide](https://bodyafterforty.online/free-guide)**

Tap the link to send it, or just forward her this PDF. It's free, and she'll get her own copy.

### What's next from us

You're on our list now, so we'll send you more like this: short, honest and useful. No miracle creams, no false promises.

#### Seeing a doctor soon?

Our Doctor's Kit helps you walk in with three months of notes, the right questions, and what to say if you're brushed off. At [bodyafterforty.online/shop](https://bodyafterforty.online/shop).

#### Want more on one change?

Read our articles on belly fat, thinning hair, dry skin, sleep and more, free at [bodyafterforty.online/articles](https://bodyafterforty.online/articles).

## SOURCES

# Where this comes from

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**Please read**

This guide is for information. It isn't medical advice and it doesn't replace a doctor, nurse or pharmacist. Never start, stop or change a medicine without talking to one.

Made by Body After Forty. Written with the help of AI and checked against the sources above.