



# Who's at risk of early menopause?

Research from the 1970 and 1958 British birth cohort studies has linked several factors throughout women's lives to early menopause.



1

## What do we mean by early menopause?

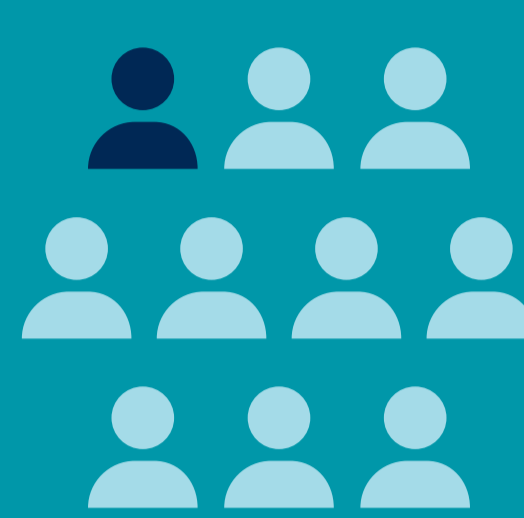
Early menopause is when a woman undergoes menopause **spontaneously**<sup>1</sup> before the age of 45



This affects up to

# 10%

of women



2

## Why is early menopause a problem?

### Related health conditions:

Women who undergo an early menopause have a **higher risk** of osteoporosis, depression, heart disease, dementia and a range of other health conditions.



### Economic issues:

Early menopausal women also suffer economic disadvantage. For example, they spend around **4 months less time in employment** once they enter their 50s compared to other women.



3

## Who is more likely to undergo an early menopause?

The age a woman reaches the menopause is strongly influenced by her genes, but non-genetic factors can also play a role. Several factors as far back as childhood were connected to early menopause<sup>2</sup>.

### Childhood factors:



Women who grew up in a working class family<sup>3</sup> were

# 2X

as likely to experience early menopause



Being breastfed for less than a month or never

# 30%

higher odds for early menopause<sup>3</sup>

### Adult factors:

Gynaecological problems

# 68%

more likely to undergo early menopause



Exercising one or more days per week

# 25%

less likely to go through early menopause



Not employed in late thirties or early forties

# 43%

more likely to undergo early menopause<sup>4</sup>



4

## Lifetime smoking habits increase the chances of early menopause



Women whose mothers smoked while pregnant

# 24%

higher odds for early menopause

Women who smoke at 16

# 51%

higher odds for early menopause

Women who smoke in their early 30s

# 69%

higher odds for early menopause

5



“Early menopause is linked to a range of serious health conditions, so by identifying risk factors – especially those we might be able to change – we can improve women's health in later life. Looking across the whole of a woman's life gives us a much clearer picture of what factors lead to early menopause, and when making a change might have the most impact.”

Professor Alice Sullivan, UCL Social Research Institute

## More about this research

### Full paper:

This research is part of a project called The economic and social value of health from childhood to later life, carried out by the UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies and funded by the Health Foundation.

### Find out more:

[www.cls.ucl.ac.uk/economicandsocialvalueofhealth](http://www.cls.ucl.ac.uk/economicandsocialvalueofhealth)

<sup>1</sup> This research considered women who had not had a period in the past 12 months to be menopausal, unless there was another reason menstruation has stopped, such as surgery (including hysterectomy), medication or pregnancy.

<sup>2</sup> These findings control for a range of factors that might affect the link to early menopause. For a full description of control variables, please see Peycheva et al.

<sup>3</sup> For a full description of reference categories, please see Peycheva et al.

<sup>4</sup> Not employed<sup>4</sup> includes women unemployed, in education, sick or disabled, or looking after home or family.