References:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Office on Women's Health
www.womenshealth.gov/menopause

HealthyWomen
www.healthywomen.org

For more information about menopause, please visit the websites above.
WHAT IS MENOPAUSE?
Menopause is when a woman stops having her monthly menstrual cycle. The average age for menopause is 52, but it can occur anytime between the late 40's to mid 50's. This change occurs when the ovaries enter a quiet state and no longer produce the hormones estrogen and progesterone.

SYMPTOMS
While many women experience few symptoms, most women report one or more of the following symptoms in the years before or during menopause:
- Hot flashes
- Night sweats
- Emotional changes
- Irregular periods or periods that are heavier or lighter than usual
- Vaginal dryness and/or discomfort during intercourse
- Trouble sleeping
- Weight gain
- Hair loss or thinning
- Trouble concentrating or memory lapses

MANAGING SYMPTOMS

Medications
- Low-dose birth control pills may help with hot flashes, vaginal dryness, emotional changes, and irregular periods.
- Estrogen and progesterone replacement therapy in the form of pills, creams, patches, sprays, and vaginal inserts.
- Certain non-hormonal medications can also help with menopause symptoms. Talk to your doctor to see if any of these are right for you.

Other Methods
- Hot flashes: Avoid things that trigger your hot flashes. Dress in layers. Use a fan.
- Problems sleeping: Be physically active. Avoid caffeine after noon, and avoid alcohol close to bedtime. Keep your bedroom dark, quiet, and cool. Avoid napping during the day. Talk to your doctor about good sleep hygiene.
- Vaginal dryness: lubricants are over-the-counter moisturizers
- Mood swings: Get enough sleep and stay physically active. Avoid taking on too many responsibilities. Try a support group.
- Memory problems: Mental exercises may be beneficial.

*Ask your doctor before starting any medications and talk to your doctor about your symptoms. All medications may not be appropriate for all patients.

LONG-TERM HEALTH RISKS

Osteoporosis
Osteoporosis is the loss of bone mass, making bones more fragile and at increased risk of fractures. When estrogen levels fall after menopause, a woman's overall bone density can drop. Talk to your doctor about the risks for osteoporosis and whether a screening "dexas" or bone density scan is right for you.

Coronary Artery Disease (CAD)
CAD is the narrowing of arteries that supply blood to the heart. It results from plaque build-up in the arteries. After menopause, a woman's risk for CAD increases. This is thought to be due, in part, to the loss of the protective effects of estrogen on the cardiovascular system.

To prevent CAD, maintain a healthy diet, do not smoke, and get regular exercise. The benefits and risks of hormone therapy vary depending on a woman's age and her individual history.

See your doctor to determine your risk and if you have other conditions, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or diabetes that may need to be treated to help reduce your risk of CAD.