

# Menopause Awareness Among Premenopausal Women in Assam



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## Abstract

**Background:** The aim of this study was to determine the level of awareness regarding menopause among women in premenopausal period in Nagaon district Assam.

**Methods:** Study was conducted in Nagaon district, Assam. For the present study, the study population comprised of the women in the age group of 45 to 55 years of that area. 60 women were included in the study. Only the peri-menopausal women were included in the current study. Their level of awareness about menopause was investigated. The study was done by using interview technique, self developed semi structured interview schedule. Data was collected with regard to socio demographic information, which included personal data, family history, basic informations related to menopause, its management and other variables of menopause etc.

**Results:** There was lack of knowledge regarding body physiology and the concept of hormones. It was found that only 13.3 % women were aware of menopausal symptoms. Moreover the awareness level was found to be lower regarding the consequences and even treatment against menopause but they had the basic idea about menopause.

**Conclusions:** Thus it is observed that relatively good numbers of women were not aware of menopausal issues and related risk factors associated with it. The healthcare professionals, mass media etc can create awareness regarding various health problems of menopause.

**Keywords:** Awareness, Menopause, Pre-menopause, Body Physiology, Treatment.

## Introduction

Menopause is a natural life transition and for half the population of the planet, an inevitable event. Though the idea of menopause as medical condition is nothing new, still so many aspects of menopause are misunderstood and many more are simply not talked about. Now a day's women's health has been a global concern and the focus shifted towards menopausal women due to increase life expectancy and their population. As menopause is a natural phenomenon, every woman will face menopause but awareness regarding its problems faced during menopause needs to be addressed. Menopause is the end of reproductive life. The average age of menopause is 51 years among the women internationally. According to National Institute on Aging (2010) usually menopause happens naturally, but some women develop symptoms of menopause and stop having menstrual cycles much earlier than expected. Before age 40, a menopause-like condition can happen for no known reason, or it can be caused by radiation treatment, some medicines like those used in chemotherapy, an autoimmunity (some of a women's own body cells attacking her ovary or ovaries), or genetic errors. Radiation can make the ovaries stop working, as can some treatments like chemotherapy for cancer. Menopause is becoming important public health issue. In this modern world the life expectancy is gradually increasing, therefore the proportion of women who are menopausal is also increasing.

## Menopause

Menopause is a natural transition encompassing not only the biological changes but also the social and cultural changes associated with the aging process (Hunt, 2000; Schneider, 2002; Zöllner, Acquadro, & Schaefer, 2005). Menopause typically (but not always) occurs in women in midlife, during their late 40s or early 50s, and signals the end of the fertile phase of a woman's life. This span of time is also referred to as the change of life or the climacteric. The word 'menopause' is derived from Greek-men or menos meaning 'month' and pauses meaning 'to stop'. Menopause is the time in a women's life when the function of the ovaries ceases and the ovaries are the main source of female hormones- estrogen, are the main

source of female hormones- estrogen, which controls the development of female body characteristics such as the breasts, body shape and body hair. Estrogen protects the bones. A woman can develop osteoporosis (thinning of bones) later in life when her ovaries do not produce adequate estrogen. The process of natural menopause is gradual and has three stages:

**Perimenopause**

This typically begins several years before menopause, when the ovaries gradually make less estrogen. Perimenopause lasts up until menopause, the point when the ovaries stop releasing eggs. In the last 1 to 2 years of perimenopause, the drop in estrogen quickens. At this stage, many women have menopause symptoms.

**Menopause**

This is the point when it's been a year since a woman last had her last menstrual period. At this stage, the ovaries have stopped releasing eggs and making most of their estrogen.

**Postmenopause**

These are the years after menopause. During this stage, menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes ease for most women. But health risks related to the loss of estrogen rise as the woman ages.

**Importance of knowledge about menopause:**

Women's health, though often neglected, is very important to a family's as well as a nation's growth and development. Menopausal health demands priority in the Indian scenario due to the increase in life expectancy and growing population of menopausal women. Some women find this transition barely noticeable while, others find it life altering. In an average Indian family, it is quite normal for women's health issues to be given secondary importance; not only by other family members but also by the concerned women themselves. Large efforts are required to educate and make women aware of menopausal symptoms, reduction of discomforts and enable them to seek appropriate medical care to avoid disability in future. The importance of research in the area of women's health has to be emphasized to identify the awareness on menopause, the symptoms experience and appropriate interventions to manage the same. Awareness needs to be created among women on menopause and self-care management for menopausal related health problems to maintain optimal Quality of life. There is a need to explore the current perceptions of menopause among women; evaluate the prevalence of menopausal symptoms and identify the coping strategies adopted by them to consider women's individual health values. Experiencing menopause is experiencing transition in life for a woman. No more periods, no more child bearing, no more milk producing capability are some of the changes that immediately hit a woman. There are also changes in physical appearance, psyche, and a dry vagina. So it is important that all women understand the physiological and emotional symptoms to expect in order to protect against the risks.

**Objectives of the Study**

1. The aim of this study was to investigate the level of awareness about menopause among women in premenopausal period.
2. To promote awareness amongst women regarding menopause

**Research Design**

A self developed interview schedule was used to assess the level of awareness about menopause among women in perimenopausal period.

**Setting**

Nagaon district, Assam

**Population**

Selected premenopausal women of Nagaon district, Assam.

**Sample**

Women in the age group of 45-55years.

**Sample size**

60 women between the age of 45-55years.

**Sampling technique**

Purposive sampling technique.

**Criteria for sample selection:****Inclusion criteria**

1. Perimenopausal women of about 45-55 years.
2. Perimenopausal women who are willing to participate in the study.

**Exclusion criteria**

1. Postmenopausal women..
2. Those who take some medicine regularly (for life style diseases like diabetes etc.)
3. Those who have prior history of psychiatric treatment.

**Tools for Data Collection**

The following tool was used for collecting data:

**Interview schedule**

A semi structured interview schedule developed by the Researcher was used to collect the data. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended and multiple-choice questions. Data was collected with regard to socio demographic information, which included personal data, family history, basic informations related to menopause, its management and other variables of menopause etc.

**Methods**

For the present study the samples were collected from Nagaon district. The study population comprised of the women in the age group 45 to 55 years of that area. Sixty women were included in the study. The sample was collected as per the inclusion criteria mentioned above. Locked houses, postmenopausal women or the women who did not give the consent were not included in the study. Only the peri-menopauses were included in the study. Their level of awareness about menopause was enquired. The study was done by interview technique using pre- designed questionnaire. Data was collected on socio demographic information, awareness, management and other variables of menopause. The socio-demographic variables included the women's age, marital status, education level, general concept of menopause. Participating women were asked 'do they know about menopause' or 'change in life'.

Participating women were also asked about their menopausal symptom if they were menopausal. Questions were also asked to know if they knew anything about menopause or its long term problems or any treatment modality available. Lastly they were asked whether they know about its side effect, availability and consequences. The data was collected, compiled and analysed.

### Result and Discussion

The study population comprised of 60 women from Nagaon district. The investigator attempted to gather information related to the sample selected for the study through a questionnaire e.g. (Name, Educational qualification, marital status, type of family, number of children, monthly income etc.)

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants**

Variable	NO.	%
<b>AGE</b>		
45-49yrs	52	86.7
50-54yrs	8	13.3
<b>Educational Status</b>		
Below Class X	5	8.3
Class X Pass	4	6.7
Upto Class XII	23	38.3
Graduate	15	25.0
Post Graduate	13	21.7
<b>Occupation</b>		
Service	25	41.7
Business	10	16.7
Housewife	25	41.7
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	53	88.3
Un-married (single/widow/divorced)	7	11.7
<b>Family Type</b>		
Nuclear	41	68.3
Joint	19	31.7
<b>Regular Menstrual Cycle</b>		
Yes	1	1.7
No	59	98.3

Table 1 shows distribution of the sample according to age, educational qualification, occupation, marital status, family type, regular menstrual cycle. Out of total women enrolled in the study, the percentage of Education- up to class xii is 38.3, which is higher than below class x-8.3%, class x pass-6.7%, graduate-25%, post graduate-21.7%. Again 41.7% were service holder, 41.7% were housewife, while only 16.7% were business women. Then 88.3% were married, while only 11.7% were single or widow or divorced. About 68.3% women belong to nuclear family and 31.7% of women belong to joint family. Only 1.7% women had their menstrual cycle regularly while 98.3% of women had irregular menstrual cycle.

**Table-2 Awareness of The Study Population**

Variable	No.	%
<b>Awareness about menopause(women)</b>	60	100
<b>Awareness among husband</b>		
Yes	53	88.3
No	7	11.7
<b>What is the meaning of menopause?</b>		
No cycle	56	93.3
Irregular cycle	4	6.7
<b>Cause of menopause?</b>		
Body physical process	35	58.3
Hormonal imbalance	25	41.7
<b>Knowledge about hormones</b>		
Yes	19	31.7
No	41	68.3
<b>Knowledge about menopause symptoms</b>		
Yes	8	13.3
No	52	86.7
<b>Is menopause harmful?</b>		
Yes	20	33.3
No	40	66.7
<b>Is there any treatment against menopause?</b>		
Yes	4	6.7
No	56	93.3

According to Table 2 all the women (100%) had the basic knowledge that menopause is a part of women's health as shown in the table but the husband's level of awareness was found to be (88.3%). The general knowledge about menopause was found among the women but there was lack of knowledge regarding body physiology and hormones. Again we found that only 13.3 % women were aware of menopausal symptoms. Even most of the women were not aware that menopause could be harmful and treatment against menopause is available. Some women took calcium or some Ayurvedic, Homeopathy treatment or home remedy to treat menopausal symptoms. Majority of females took treatment without doctors' advice. In the present study women had the opinion that all these problems are very common due to age factor and had not taken these symptoms very seriously. Thus it is observed that there is lack of awareness among the subjects under this study regarding the health issues related to menopause.

**Conclusion**

Any major life change can be difficult to handle and menopause is no exception. Many women feel they have to struggle through the uncertainties and discomforts alone. So the awareness towards the concept of menopause is very important. Proper knowledge and awareness regarding it, is very necessary, especially for women. Women's awareness regarding menopause is based on different factors like age, the number of births, social, economical, cultural, educational status, and geographical factors. The more women know the scientific facts behind menopause, the better they are able to dismiss the myths and judgements and that will make it easier to cope. Based on these values, the healthcare professionals, mass media can create awareness regarding the risk factors associated with menopause. They can use different approaches to educate and treat women with menopausal symptoms and concerns that are culturally relevant, which may enable them to recognise the problems and make proper decision for medical intervention. With appropriate counseling, health information and an understanding of the menopause and its dimensions, menopause can become a time of beginning, rather than an end. Caring for menopause entails more than providing medication.

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