



Stages of Life: Navigating Menopause

Menopause is a natural and powerful stage of life that brings opportunities for self-reflection, renewal, and spiritual growth. It's a time to reconnect and embrace the changes in our bodies. This stage is also an important opportunity for mentorship, where we can pass down knowledge and guidance to younger generations, supporting them in understanding and respecting their bodies and reclaiming their body sovereignty.

In Métis culture, menopause is not seen as the end of life or fertility but as a transition to becoming an Elder—a guide and a carrier of wisdom. This is a time when women move into a restful and nurturing phase, as our bodies have been utilized to their fullest. It is a time to rest, nurture our body, mind, and spirit, and prepare to transition into the teaching phase of our lives.

As we reflect on our lived experiences and Métis teachings, we approach this phase with strength and pride, knowing that we continue to make meaningful contributions to our communities. Through this transition, we embrace our role as Knowledge Holders, passing on teachings to the next generations with confidence and grace. This is also a time when intellectual self-reflection begins to deepen, as we start to reflect on, share, and pass on our knowledge and experiences to others, particularly to younger generations. Through this transition, we step into our role as mentors offering what we have learned with confidence, grace and generosity.

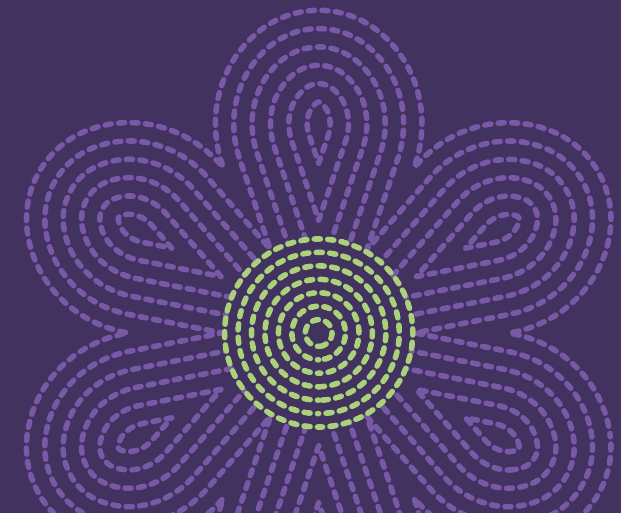
By learning from our Métis stories, we can embrace this important fourth stage of life with understanding and pride.

Disclaimer: These worksheets are for educational purposes only. For medical advice, consult a trusted healthcare provider who respects your cultural values and needs.



“As we get through our life stages, we also want to talk about menopause or perimenopause. They are not medical conditions; they are just life stages, and they are empowering to learn about.”

Participant Comment, Health Forum 2024
Embracing Menopause as a Métis Person



Understanding Menopause and Perimenopause

Menopause is a natural stage in life. It marks the end of menstrual cycles and typically occurs when someone who menstruates has gone without a period for 12 consecutive months (or 13 moon cycles). This transition is caused by the natural decrease in estrogen levels, which can bring changes like hot flashes, mood swings, and sleep disturbances. Perimenopause, the phase leading up to menopause, can last several years and includes many of these symptoms as the body begins to adjust.

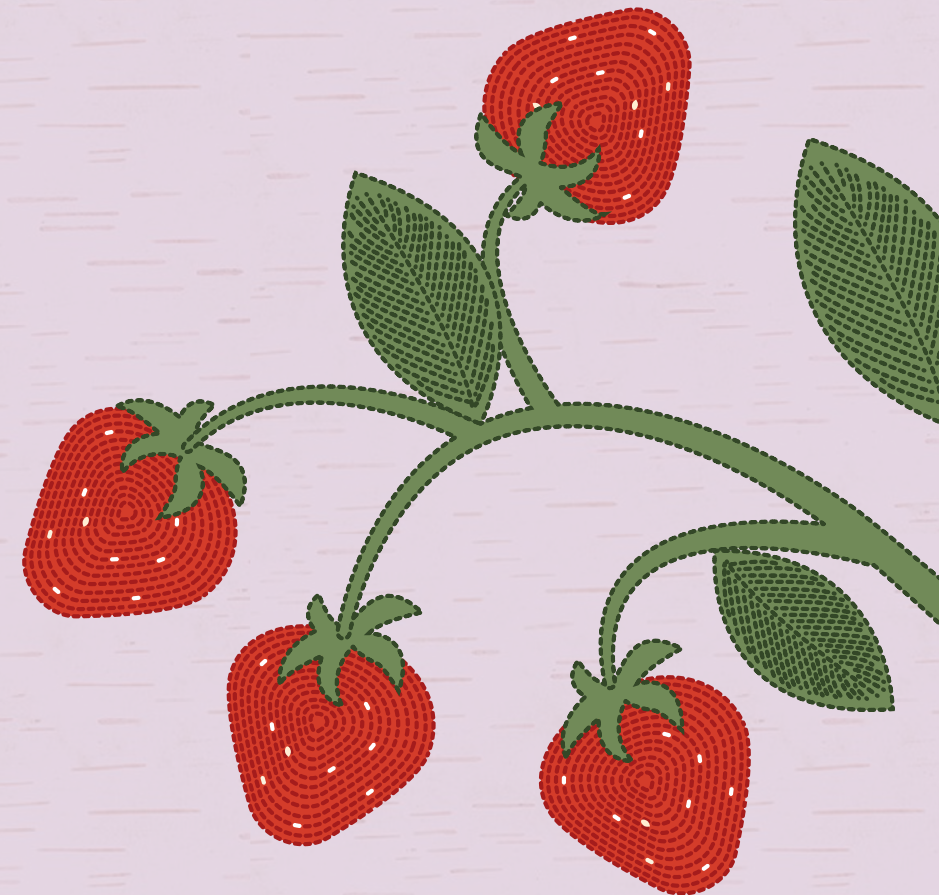
Rather than seeing menopause as marking the end of fertility, it is a time of transition to our Elder phase. Our Elders teach us that menopause is an important stage, full of opportunities for growth and empowerment. It's a time to embrace the changes in our bodies with patience and respect while finding ways to nurture our mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

Reflect on Your Experience

Menopause brings heightened awareness to your physical, emotional, and spiritual self, creating space for self-discovery and intellectual self—this is a time when people start to reflect and share their knowledge and experience. It is a time to reconnect with aspects of yourself that may have been set aside during the busy years of childbearing and caregiving. This stage offers an opportunity to honour the changes you're experiencing and to allow yourself to feel and heal from past experiences.

Take a moment to get to know and understand your body. Notice and acknowledge the sensations and changes you're experiencing. Menopause is also a time to reconnect with feelings you may have set aside during the busy years of childbearing and caregiving. Allowing yourself to feel and honour these emotions can bring healing and personal growth.

Reflect on your journey through menopause. How has this transition shaped your identity as a Métis woman? What wisdom and strength have you gained through your experiences? Consider how you can use this knowledge to support and guide others in your community.



Self-Care Strategies for Navigating Menopause

At every stage of life, including menopause, self-care is an important practice for maintaining body sovereignty. Taking care of your body, mind, heart, and spirit ensures that you remain grounded as you navigate these changes. Here are some self-care strategies to support you during this transition.

Get Regular Exercise: Get moving every day—whether it's a walk, dance, or other forms of physical activity. Just 30 minutes of walking can help boost your energy, improve mood, and support physical health.

Practice Good Sleep Hygiene: Establish a calming nighttime routine. Avoid screens, wind down with a book or a cup of tea, and aim for 7-8 hours of sleep to support your mental and emotional health.

Nourish Yourself: Eating balanced meals and taking time to savour nourishing food is important for maintaining energy and feeling connected to your body. Try incorporating traditional foods like wild game, berries, and herbs into your diet to honour the land that sustains us.

Seek Guidance and Support: Reach out to a friend, family member, or Elder for encouragement and perspective. Sometimes, just talking to someone who understands can bring comfort during this time of change.

Stay Connected: Engage with your community by participating in social gatherings, sharing circles, or joining ceremonial activities. Sharing experiences and supporting each other through these transitions strengthens the bonds that keep us connected.

Engage in Traditional Medicines: Incorporating traditional medicines, such as smudging, can be a powerful way to cleanse and restore balance to your body, mind, and spirit. Traditional plants and herbs help to ground and reconnect you with your roots, supporting your emotional and spiritual health during this transition.

Spend Time with Community

Spending time with Elders, Kokums, Grandmothers, Knowledge Holders, Aunties during this phase is essential. Their wisdom and guidance can help you navigate this life stage with self compassion. Listen to their stories, ask questions, and be open to their teachings. Engage in Métis protocols for teaching, visiting, and learning and pass down the knowledge that has sustained our people for generations. Remember to honour the protocols for teaching and listening as you engage with their knowledge.



Photo credits: LFMO Grandmother Linda Boudreau-Semaganis, 2024

Connect with Nature and Culture

Spend time outdoors — on the land, by the water, and with nature — to feel grounded. Embrace your culture by engaging in Métis art practices, the Michif language, storytelling, traditional plants and medicines, cooking traditional foods, jigging, and listening to and/or playing the fiddle.

Participate in seasonal traditions — like gathering spring plants or celebrating the fall harvest — and take part in community events, celebrations, and ceremonies.

By learning from our Métis stories, we can embrace this important fourth stage of life. Connecting with the land and engaging in Métis traditions honours our body's natural rhythms while nurturing a strong sense of identity, belonging, and strength — reminding us of who we are.

Celebrate Menopause

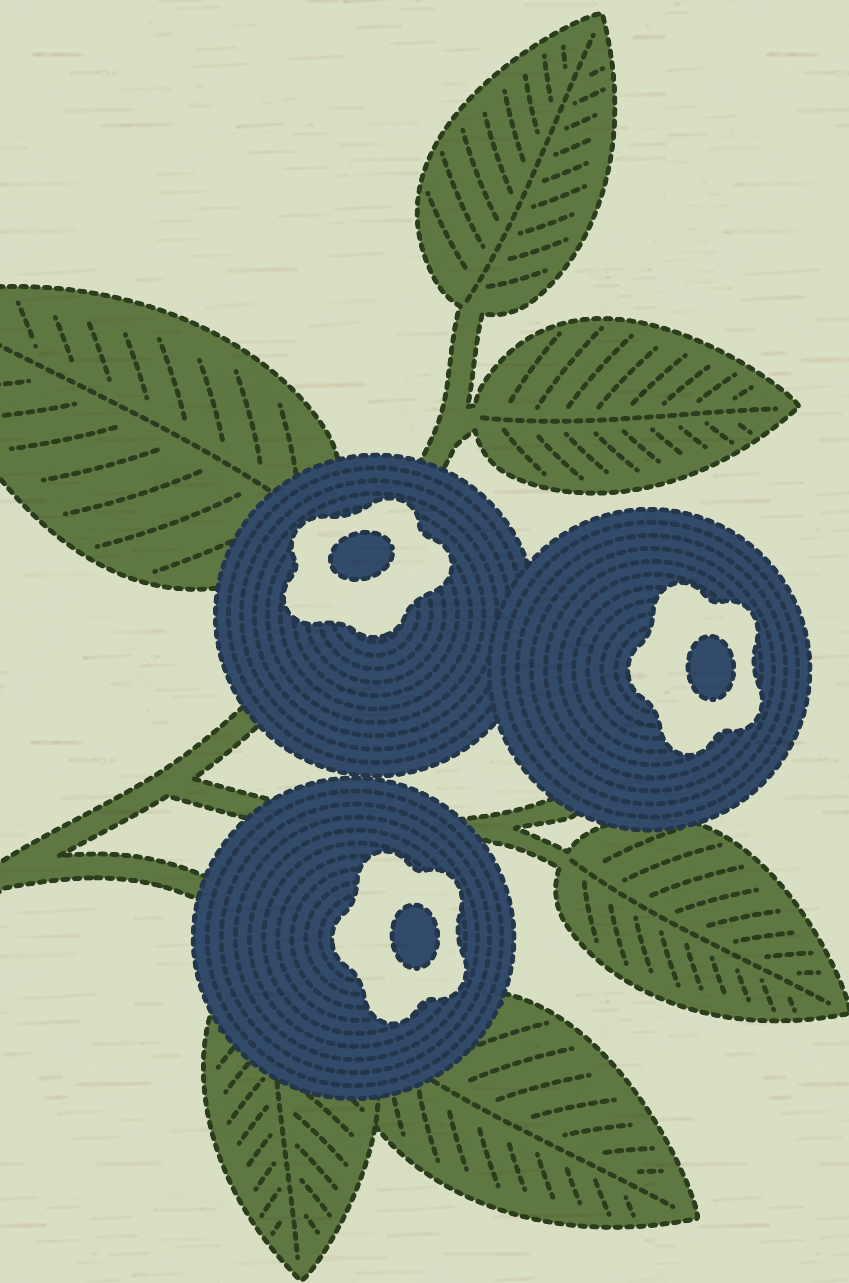
Menopause is a time to embrace the changes in your body, mind, and spirit, knowing that you are never leaving yourself behind. You are becoming a source of wisdom and strength for future generations.

Reflect on how you can celebrate this stage of life—perhaps by organizing a community gathering, hosting a storytelling circle, or engaging in other Métis traditions that honour this important phase.

Remember, this stage is not something to fear or hide from—it's an opportunity to step into your power and continue contributing to the community that has always supported you. Strong social and family support during this time can improve overall well-being by addressing the physical symptoms, mental health, emotional resilience, social connections, and spiritual needs of menopausal Métis.

Embrace the transition with pride, continue to share your knowledge, and walk forward with the courage that has always been part of who you are.





Mentor the Next Generation

You carry valuable knowledge that can empower and inspire others. Share your stories with the younger generations in your family and community. In Métis culture, storytelling is a vital practice that preserves our traditions, culture and knowledge. By creating safe spaces for conversations about menstruation, menopause, and sexual health, we can decolonize health systems and normalize these experiences.

Through sharing circles, we create safe opportunities for people of all ages to feel seen, heard, and supported as they navigate their bodies and cycles—we strengthen the next generation and empower them to embrace their body sovereignty.

The passing down of teachings has been greatly affected by a disconnect from Elders and a loss of support systems within extended families, as many have moved away for various reasons like schooling, careers, medical, family needs, or new opportunities. In the past, teachings were shared by word of mouth, but now we need to write them down or record them in videos.

It's important for young people to find Elders and Knowledge Holders who can guide them in learning the traditions, history, and roles of their community. Those who have learned these teachings should share them generously, and those who want to learn must also honour the Elder's or Knowledge Holder's protocols, remembering that we must always give something in return for what we receive.

Source: The Art of Storytelling published by Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association, 2008. Researched and compiled by Linda Boudreau-semaganis with A.Adrian Wolfleg.