



WHAT IS PREMATURE OVARIAN INSUFFICIENCY?

Premature menopause, premature ovarian failure and/or premature ovarian insufficiency (POI) are terms that are generally used to describe the same condition, whatever the cause. The words are often used interchangeably, which can be confusing at first. There is no internationally agreed wording, however the newer term for the condition is premature ovarian insufficiency, which may describe it more accurately as the ovaries may not have irreversibly 'failed' and premature ovarian insufficiency has important differences from the 'normal' menopause which occurs at an average age of 51.

SYMPTOMS:

- Irregular periods or periods stopping – this is the most common reason for recognising that something is not right
- Infertility
- Hot flushes and night sweats
- Insomnia/disrupted sleep
- Palpitations
- Weight gain (especially around waist and abdomen)
- Skin and hair changes (dryness, thinning)
- Headaches
- Breast tenderness
- Mood swings and irritability
- Anxiety/panic attacks
- Loss of self-esteem
- Lowered libido
- Difficulty concentrating and memory lapses
- Fatigue/low energy levels
- Joint/muscle pain
- Vaginal dryness and urinary infections
- Depression

The difficulty is that many of these are common complaints and can be attributed to life events, stress or other factors. This can lead to frustrating delays in diagnosis and also mean that not every symptom experienced is a direct result of POI. However, many women do look back after being diagnosed and realise that certain complaints probably were due to an early menopause.

Age is the key factor, as early or premature menopause or POI is typically used to mean menopause that comes well before the average age of normal menopause — when you're still in your teens, 20s, 30s, or early 40s. Early menopause is used to describe menopause before the age of 45 and POI when it occurs below the age of 40.

Simply put, it means that the ovaries aren't working properly. They stop producing eggs years, and in some cases even decades, before they should. In addition, the ovaries are unable to produce the hormones estrogen and progesterone, which have important roles in women's health and well-being.

POI is different to menopause that occurs at around the average age (52 years). Not only does it occur at a very young age, but the ovaries often don't completely fail. This means that ovarian function can fluctuate over time, occasionally resulting in a period, ovulation or even pregnancy, several years after diagnosis. Because of this intermittent temporary return of ovarian function, approximately 5-10% of women with POI may still conceive.

learn more about POI and treatments at daisynetwork.org/