



# What is POI?

**POI** or **Premature/Primary Ovarian Insufficiency\***. It's where a woman's ovaries stop working normally before the age of 40.

**Early menopause** is when your ovaries stop working normally between the age of 40 – 45 years. This is earlier than the usual age of menopause (between 45-55 years).

POI leads to fewer or no eggs being released and lower production of hormones (such as estrogen & progesterone). POI can lead to irregular menstrual periods or no periods at all, and it can make it harder to get pregnant. It can occur without warning or after medical treatments. Women with POI might also experience symptoms similar to natural menopause, like hot flushes and night sweats. POI cannot be predicted or cured but can be managed.

## Risk Factors

**1** Family history of early menopause

**2** Medical treatments like chemotherapy, radiotherapy, or pelvic surgery. Surgery to your ovaries increases the risk of POI.

**3** Smoking

**4** Ethnicity, poverty, low body weight, exposure to environmental toxins may also affect your risk.

## Causes

**Genetic:** Problems with chromosomes (like Turner syndrome) or specific genes (like Fragile X). Research has identified over 100 genes associated with POI.



**Medical Treatments:** Chemotherapy & pelvic or whole-body radiotherapy can harm the ovaries. In some countries, surgical removal of both ovaries is the most common cause of POI.



**Metabolic:** Rare disorders like galactosemia, which causes harmful build-up of galactose, a type of sugar, in the ovaries.



**Autoimmune:** Your immune system attacks its own glands & tissues (like adrenal or thyroid glands, rheumatoid arthritis).



**Infections:** Such as mumps or HIV.



**Idiopathic (Unknown):** This means doctors don't know the cause of POI. It might be because of genes that researchers haven't found yet or cannot be detected on current genetic screening. Most women with POI not caused by medical treatments have idiopathic POI.



## POI can impact your health in different ways:

**Menopausal Symptoms:** Symptoms like hot flushes, night sweats, and vaginal dryness can occur.



**Bone Health:** Women with POI are at a higher risk of osteoporosis or bone loss, which makes bones weak & more likely to break.



**Heart Health:** There is an increased risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol (blood fats) & high blood sugar levels.



**Infertility:** POI can make it hard to get pregnant.



**Quality of life:** POI can affect your wellbeing & health in many different ways which can impact your quality of life.



**Brain Health:** Untreated POI has been linked to a higher risk of cognitive problems, Parkinson's disease & dementia in later life.



**Muscle Health:** POI may be linked to changes in muscle health with loss of muscle mass & strength.



**Emotional Wellbeing:** POI can lead to feelings of sadness, anxiety or depression.



**Sexual Wellbeing:** POI can impact desire/libido & cause difficulties having sex.



## Managing POI

It's important to work with a healthcare professional to make a personalised care plan for you. Managing POI involves:

- A healthy lifestyle
- Hormone therapy or non-hormonal treatments
- Emotional support
- Education
- Fertility treatment if needed
- Regular check-ups

**Ask Early Menopause**



The free **Ask Early Menopause App** provides comprehensive, high quality POI and early menopause information, women's stories and support tools that are based on the latest evidence ([www.askearlymenopause.org](http://www.askearlymenopause.org)).

Information from the updated **2024 ESHRE POI guideline:** ([www.eshre.eu/Guidelines-and-Legal/Guidelines/Premature-ovarian-insufficiency](http://www.eshre.eu/Guidelines-and-Legal/Guidelines/Premature-ovarian-insufficiency))

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\*Primary ovarian insufficiency is the term for POI often used in North America