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# No, IVF Doesn't Trigger Menopause — But the Side Effects Can Be Hellishly Similar

Following Kourtney Kardashian's comments that IVF medication "put her into menopause," experts are setting the record straight.

By [Maressa Brown](#) | Published on April 7, 2022 @ 03:18PM



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Everyone's path to conception and parenthood is different, but for many, fertility treatments like in vitro fertilization (IVF) end up being the best route. In fact, the most recent research on the subject from [Pew Center Research](#) found that 33% of American adults report that they or someone they know has used some type of fertility treatment in order to try to have a baby.

But while IVF treatment — a series of procedures in which mature eggs are retrieved from ovaries and fertilized by sperm in a lab, and

then a fertilized egg is transferred to a uterus — is common, misinformation around the process is rampant.

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Case in point: In a [since-deleted, leaked teaser for Hulu's \*The Kardashians\*](#), Kourtney noted that her fertility treatments haven't "been the most amazing experience," lamenting that "the medication that they've been giving me, they put me into menopause. Literally into menopause."

That remark warrants some myth-busting. "It is so important to address the confusion around this subject and differentiate between IVF and menopause symptoms because patients need to understand that IVF symptoms should and do go away," says Angeline Beltsos, M.D., a reproductive endocrinology and infertility specialist and CEO, Clinical, of [Kindbody](#), which offers fertility, gynecology, and wellness services virtually and in clinics nationwide.

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That said, Kourtney Kardashian isn't wrong in noting that the experience can bring on some jarring and unpleasant symptoms. "It is important to be informed of these expected side effects so that patients are aware and able to manage expectations," says Dr. Beltsos. "Understanding the risks and benefits of IVF treatment allows people to not be afraid of trying IVF based on Hollywood misconceptions."

Here's what you need to know about IVF side effects — including how they compare to those you might experience in perimenopause and menopause, according to experts.

## How IVF Symptoms Can Mimic Menopause

At first blush, it sounded like Kardashian was blaming IVF for causing her to go into early menopause, which is just not a thing. But she wasn't entirely off-base in terms of pointing out that the fertility treatment can trigger sweaty, uncomfortable side effects that we tend to associate with menopause.

While your IVF may experience might differ slightly depending on your individual health and the clinic where you're receiving treatment, the process will always involve stimulating the ovaries to produce multiple eggs instead of the one that is typically made in an unmedicated cycle, says [Jessica Ryniec](#), M.D., an ob-gyn and reproductive endocrinology and infertility specialist at [CCRM Fertility](#)

in Boston.

And the injections you'll use to stimulate the ovaries — aka the medications Kardashian referred to in her remark — are at the root of overlapping symptoms.

"Stimulation starts with the same hormones your brain usually makes to encourage an egg to grow, FSH (follicle stimulating hormone) and LH (luteinizing hormone), just in higher doses than what you make on your own," explains Dr. Ryniec. "As these follicles grow, just like in a natural cycle, they are making estrogen."

Because there are so many follicles, each producing estrogen, your estrogen levels often go much higher than they would during a normal (unmedicated) cycle. Doctors will also give you additional medication, called gonadotropins or GnRH agonist or antagonists, to prevent premature ovulation, which can spur menopausal-like side effects, such as hot flashes, headaches, and irritability, that might continue for weeks or even months, says Dr. Beltsos.

But following your IVF cycle, once the ovary starts doing its thing on its own sans medication, the regular menstrual cycle should regain its rhythm, and the symptoms should go away," she explains.

Once eggs are retrieved, progesterone begins to jump up, as it would typically before you get your period. In other words, hormone shifts are similar to what you'd have during a regular cycle, but because they're occurring more rapidly and at much higher levels, they can cause aggravating IVF side effects for some people, explains Dr. Ryniec.

All in all, side effects of IVF — which could mimic perimenopausal or menopausal symptoms — might include bloating, hot flashes, mood swings, fatigue, and insomnia (isn't that combo *so fun!*), headaches, brain fog, and breast tenderness. So, you know, basically anything that could happen to your body when your hormones are all over the place.

Even temporary weight gain can happen, which Kardashian herself pointed out in the leaked clip, noting that she's "gained so much weight" — a side effect that's led to (gross) public commentary and speculation around whether or not the Poosh founder is already expecting.

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## How Perimenopause Factors In

So while IVF doesn't "put you" into menopause, it's pretty likely that someone undergoing fertility treatments might coincidentally be dealing with perimenopause. This not-at-all fun transitional phase can last anywhere from four to 10 years before you hit menopause and is marked by period changes, hot flashes, loss of bladder control, sleep challenges, etc. — all caused by, you guessed it, hormonal fluctuations, namely lower estrogen and more FSH, points out Mache Seibel, M.D., member of the Harvard Medical School faculty and author of *Working Through Menopause: The Impact on Women, Businesses, and the Bottom Line*.

Because the body begins producing fewer eggs as you start transitioning into menopause, the pituitary gland is inspired to pump out more FSH — the hormone that fuels follicle growth, explains Dr. Seibel. Think of it this way: Because the ovary can't "hear" as well, the pituitary bumps up production of FSH as a way to speak louder to it, he explains.

And as estrogen dips and FSH spikes get more dramatic, so do lovely symptoms like vaginal dryness or, say, wanting to bite your momager's head off.

It's also important to consider the fact that many women who undergo fertility treatment are doing so *because* of impending perimenopause, says Dr. Beltsos. The average age at which a woman hits menopause in the U.S. is 51, according to the Mayo Clinic, meaning perimenopause can kick off in the late 30s and early 40s. And given that the average age of an IVF patient is 36 but many people go through the process in their early 40s (Kardashian is almost 43), there's bound to be overlap between people who are perimenopausal and those undergoing fertility treatment.

"If you are in perimenopause, you could assume IVF caused your symptoms — or vice-versa," he notes. "It's entirely possible two things are happening at the same time by coincidence, and one was attributed to the other."

Bottom line: "Women may be confused [and assume] that the IVF *caused* perimenopause when in reality, it was happening prior to treatment — not as a result of IVF," Dr. Beltsos says.

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## **Why There's No Need to Freak Out About IVF Throwing You**





# Into Menopause

The bottom line: The age at which you'll hit menopause is largely genetic — according to Dr. Beltsos, your mom's age can indicate your own timeline — and out of your control. So, despite Kardashian's claims, IVF cannot put you into menopause.

"For most people, symptoms from IVF will resolve by the time they get their period — about two weeks after the egg retrieval," says Dr. Ryniec. "This is when the hormonal shifts have resolved and the hormones go 'back to baseline.'"

And of course, actually getting pregnant from IVF will cause a whole host of new side effects to contend with, Dr. Ryniec points out. "If someone does a fresh transfer and becomes pregnant, they would then expect to start experiencing pregnancy symptoms — which can also be similar to both IVF and menopausal symptoms!"

At the end of the day, what anyone freaked out by Kourtney Kardashian's experience needs to know, according to experts: There's no evidence that IVF medications *cause* menopause to occur — literally.

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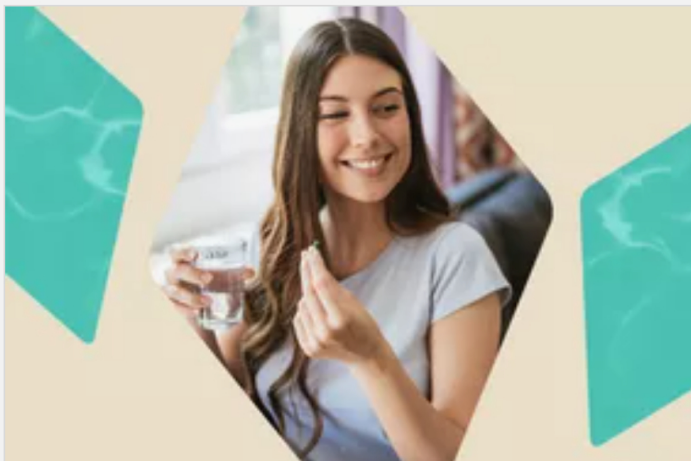
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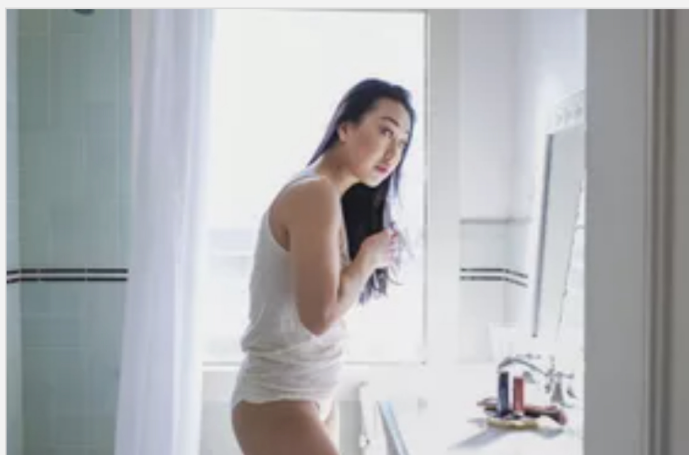
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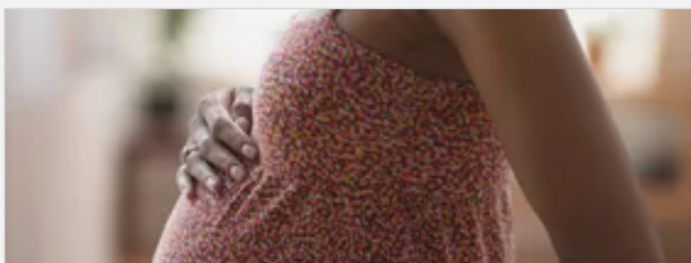
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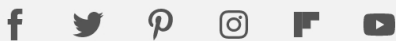
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