

Women's biological clock revealed: Hormone may predict age at menopause

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Age at menopause may now be predicted more realistically according to a new study accepted for publication in the *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism (JCEM)*. The study revealed that anti-Müllerian hormone (AMH) levels are related to the onset of menopause and are able to specify a woman's reproductive age more accurately than chronological age alone.

The levels of AMH in the blood reflect the number of small follicles present in a woman's ovaries. This follicle stock enables reproduction by ensuring monthly ovulations. Depletion of the stock leads to menopause, which normally occurs between 40 and 60 years of age.

“Couples often postpone childbearing until after age thirty, even though variation in menopausal age and corresponding variation in natural fertility means that some women are sterile as early as their thirties,” say Dr. Jeroen van Disseldorp and Dr Frank Broekmans of the University Medical Center Utrecht in Utrecht, the Netherlands. “Knowing when menopause may occur could greatly impact childbearing decisions and our findings show that such knowledge may now be available from AMH levels.”

For this study, AMH levels were measured in 144 healthy, fertile women and the data were used to determine an estimate of mean AMH as a function of age. This information was then used to estimate the distribution of the age of menopause in a sample of 3,384 women between the ages of 50 and 70. Researchers were then able to develop a

model based on AMH level and age that could predict age at menopause for individual women.

Prediction for younger women may be more problematic since observed AMH levels were underrepresented at younger ages, and a recent study in mice show that mean AMH levels do not decline at young ages.

Source: The Endocrine Society

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