

Is It Menopause OR IS IT ME?

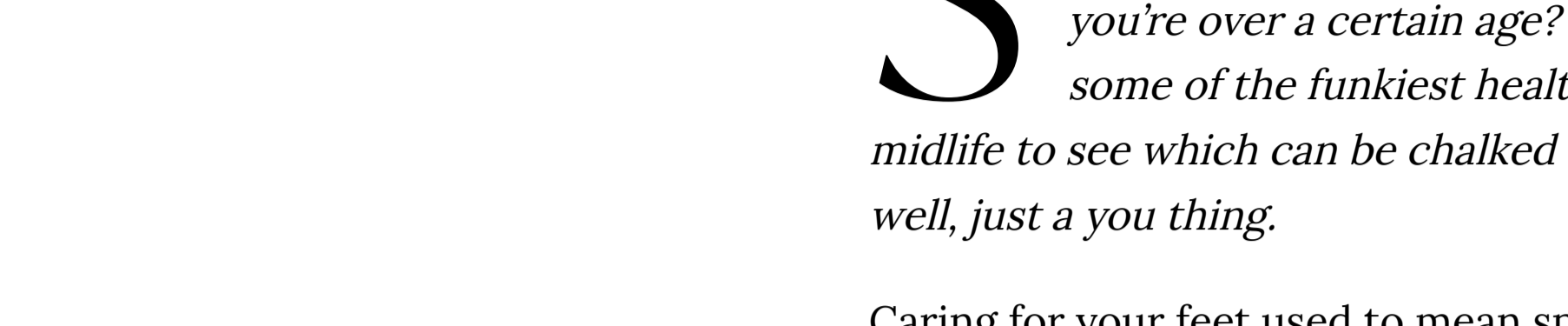
Lifestyle > Wellness

Foot Pain

The surprising reason why your dogs are always barking.

By Lisa Arbetter Published: Sep 10, 2025 2:01 PM EDT

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HEARST OWNED

Sure, we know that menopause is behind night sweats and hot flashes, but is it to blame for everything that goes awry when you're over a certain age? In this new series, we're unpacking some of the funkiest health woes people can encounter in midlife to see which can be chalked up to The Change, and which are... well, just a you thing.

Caring for your feet used to mean springing for a pedicure every month and remembering to slather on lotion before bed. Now? They're screaming for your attention.

“I CAN OFTEN LOOK AT A WOMAN’S FOOT AND KNOW SHE’S IN MENOPAUSE.”

“Many women come in saying, ‘I don’t get it. I used to jog, and now it hurts to stand,’” says Suzanne Levine, DPM, a board-certified podiatric surgeon at [Millennium Podiatry](#) in New York City. Turns out foot pain is one of the lesser-known—but incredibly common—signs of perimenopause or menopause.

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Why Your Dogs Are Barking

Estrogen (a.k.a. the don’t-know-what-you’ve-got-’til-it’s-gone hormone) helps keep bones strong and joints cushioned. When it starts to fluctuate in perimenopause, the structure of your feet begins to break down in multiple ways.

Ligaments loosen, which can contribute to fallen arches, bunions, or plantar fasciitis. Your feet may even grow longer and wider. Bones get more fragile, increasing your risk for stress fractures. And the fat pads under your heels and the balls of your feet—your built-in shock absorbers—thin out. “Many women develop metatarsalgia, which feels like walking on pebbles,” says Dr. Levine. “Or Morton’s neuroma, which feels like tingling or numbness between the toes.”

Even [your skin changes](#). “Cracked heels are very common,” she says, as plummeting estrogen levels sap collagen levels and dry everything out. “I can often look at a woman’s foot and know she’s in menopause.”

And then there’s the weight gain that often comes with menopause. Each extra pound adds about three pounds of pressure on your already compromised feet.

How to Soothe Your Soles

Fortunately, the fixes are fairly simple. Dr. Levine recommends the following:

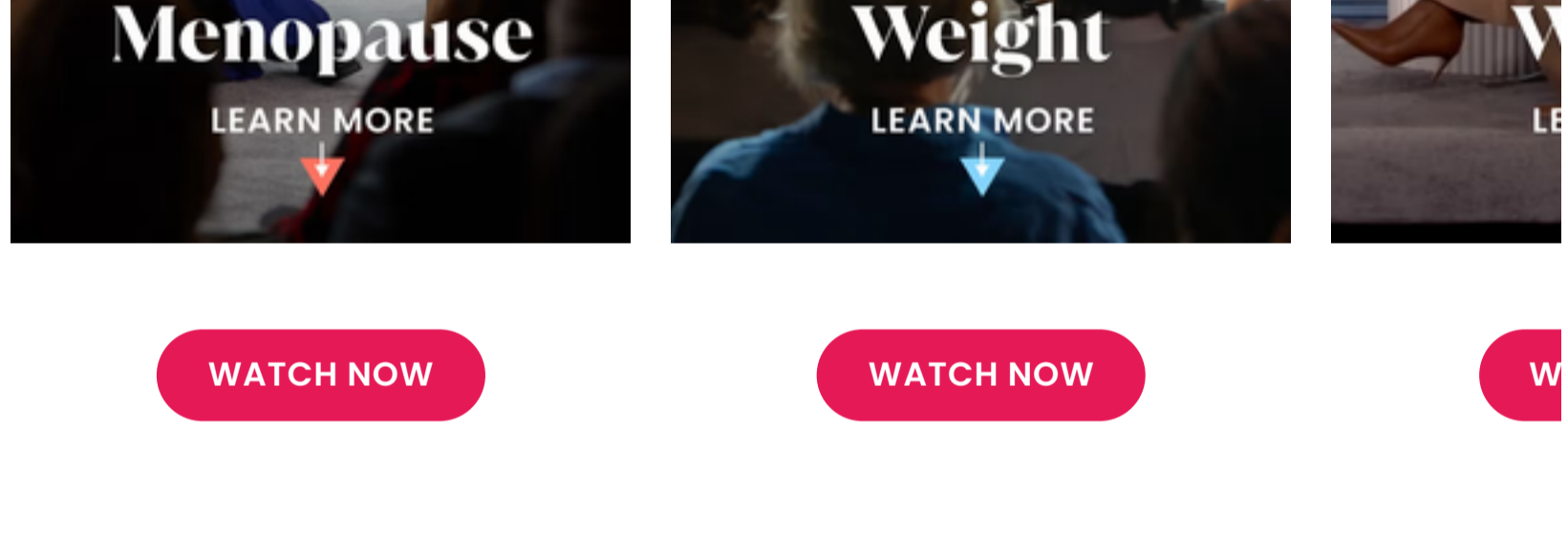
- **Choose supportive styles.** Look for cushioning, arch support, and wide toe boxes—even in your flats. And no, this doesn’t mean going full orthopedic. Check out our editors’ favorite stylish options in this year’s [Footwear O-wards](#).
- **Rotate your shoes.** Don’t wear the same pair every day, and vary heel heights.
- **Try at-home relief.** Roll a frozen water bottle under your feet, apply anti-inflammatory creams (like topical [Voltaren](#), which you can get OTC), or massage sore spots.
- **Strengthen your feet.** Pick up marbles with your toes or do towel scrunches (placing a towel on the floor and using your toes to crumple it up).
- **See a podiatrist.** “By 40, every woman should have a gait analysis,” says Dr. Levine, an assessment of your posture and movement to identify potential issues. “Small imbalances now become big issues post-menopause.” Some treatment options include custom orthotics and injections of hyaluronic acid (think facial fillers, but for your joints) or poly-L-lactic acid to restore cushioning and reduce pain. Depending on your specific issue, you might also be referred to a physical therapist to get a personalized routine that improves your strength, flexibility, and pain.

Don’t Wait for the Other Shoe to Drop

Foot problems aren’t temporary hormonal blips. They’re structural changes that are here to stay, unless you intervene. “It’s just going to get worse if you don’t take care of it,” says Dr. Levine.

Give your feet the sensible shoes they’re begging for, and wear them with pride. After surviving the pointy-toe stiletto trend of the 1990s, we’ve earned the right to fully embrace comfortable chic.

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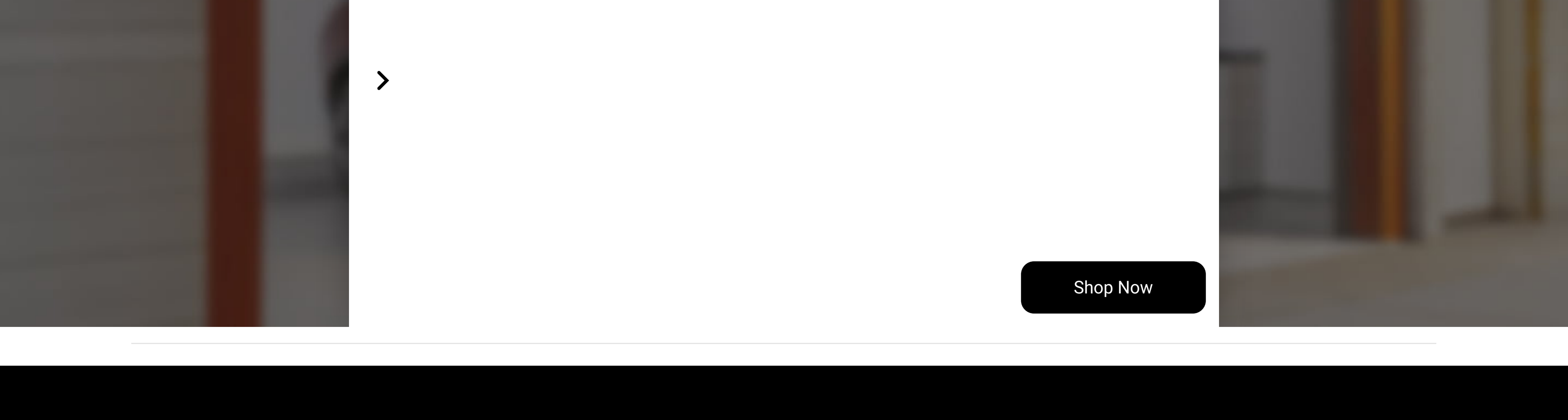
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