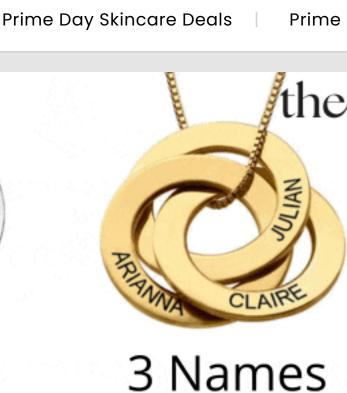
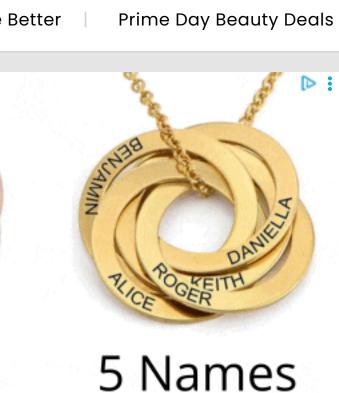


2 Names





4 Names





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Lifestyle > Wellness

# Bleeding Gums, Cavities, Dry Mouth, and More

No, you shouldn't just grin and bear these surprising symptoms.

By Lisa Arbetter Published: Jul 09, 2025 10:11 AM EDT

**28-DAY WALKING** 

**CHALLENGE** 

BASED ON YOUR AGE

Day 4: Brisk walk - 15 min Cooldown - 5 min

Day 2: Steady walk - 15 n

Day 4: Brisk walk - 10 min Cooldown - 5 min

**45-50** y.o.

Day 1:
Walk moderately 25 min
Add brisk intervals 3 × 1 min

Day 2: Steady walk - 30 min

Day 3: Incline walk - 25 min Slow recovery - 3 mir

Day 4:
Brisk walk 20 min
Cooldown 5 min

Day 1:
Wak moderately 20 min
Add brisk intervals 2 × 1 min

Day 2:
Steady walk - 20 min

Day 3:
Incline walk - 15 min
Slow recovery - 2 min

Day 4:
Brisk walk - 10 min
Cooldown - 5 min

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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.

Menopause can give you a foul mouth, and not just the swearing kind (although there's probably plenty of that too). Foul as in uncomfortably dry-à la the morning after a tequila rager-with bleeding gums and bad breath.

Yes, sudden dental issues are another menopausal symptom no one warned you about. Yet more than 80 percent of women 50 or older say they've noticed changes in their teeth or gums, and more than a third report a decline in overall oral health, per a 2023 study by Delta Dental insurance company. "It's not rare," says Daniel Croley, DMD, chief dental officer at Delta Dental. "We just don't talk about it enough."

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### When Menopause Gets Mouthy

Yes, our oral health naturally declines as we age. But if the changes hit suddenly and dramatically, it's probably shifting hormones. "When a woman who hasn't had a cavity since childhood suddenly develops three, something has changed," says Dr. Croley. "If there's no obvious reason, like a major dietary shift, menopause could be the explanation."

As with most things meno-related, the drop in estrogen is the key factor. Estrogen plays a crucial role in saliva production and composition. When saliva decreases, your mouth loses a critical line of defense against tooth

decay, cavities, gum disease, and bad breath. Reduced estrogen can also cause your jaw bones to shrink, so teeth lose their anchor. As a result, they shift, loosen, or even fall out. It also makes gums recede. Toss in stress-related teeth grinding-yep, another menopause symptom-and you're spending a lot more hours in the dental chair.

But this oral upheaval isn't just a mouth problem; it's a full-body one. "When your gums get inflamed, bacteria can seep into the bloodstream," says Dr. Croley. Once there, it can spark systemic inflammation and increase your risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, and even Alzheimer's.

### Brushing Up on Solutions

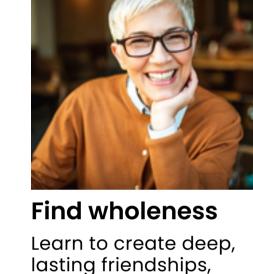
To protect your oral health during this transition:

- Hydrate frequently to combat dryness. (Yet another reason to keep that water bottle on hand at all times.) • Use alcohol-free mouthwash. It's less drying than formulations with
- alcohol. • **Snack on crunchy produce.** Apples = nature's toothbrush.
- Keep up with regular brushing, flossing, and dental cleanings. Even if
- you hate it. • Ask your dentist about salivary testing. These tests check your pH
- and enzyme levels, which can help identify changes potentially linked to hormonal shifts. • If you're not on it already, consider hormone therapy. While it's not
- prescribed specifically for dry mouth, some women see improvements, though more research is needed to confirm the effects. Most important, tell your dentist you're in perimenopause or

menopause. While more than **80 percent of dentists say** they're comfortable discussing menopause-related oral health, more than half wait for patients to raise the subject. So speak up ASAP, before these problems kick you in the teeth. Live Your Best Life with Oprah Daily



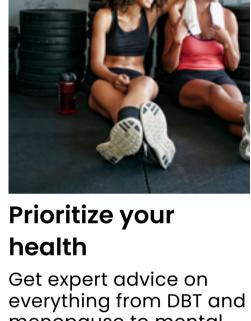
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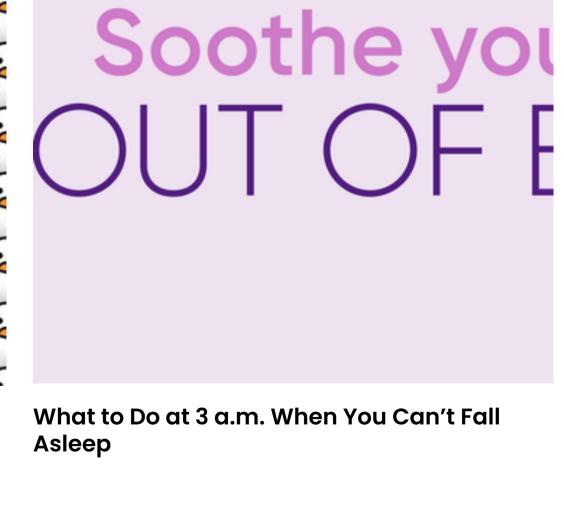
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