

It's Not You **IT'S PERI MENOPAUSE**

SARAH GRAY is one of Australia's leading dual-qualified health professionals in pharmacy and nutrition, and a certified menopause lifestyle practitioner with over 25 years of experience in the health and wellness industry. Her holistic approach focuses on supplements and science-based solutions for perimenopause and menopause. A trusted thought leader, Sarah has appeared on Channel 10's *My Market Kitchen* and is a recognised voice across radio, print, digital media and podcasts. She is also a regular contributor to leading health blogs and publications.

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Praise for *It's Not You, It's Perimenopause*

'This book is a brilliant, science-backed guide to navigating perimenopause. As both a pharmacist and nutritionist, Sarah Gray brings a rare and valuable blend of expertise – grounding her advice in solid evidence while keeping it deeply practical. I especially love that she starts with nutrition and lifestyle foundations, then layers in supplement options where appropriate. With checklists, action plans, and clear explanations, *It's Not You, It's Perimenopause* is a reader-friendly, trustworthy resource – free from hype, fluff or fads. A must-read for any woman wanting real solutions during these years.'

**—Dr Joanna McMillan, Nutrition Scientist,
TV Host, Speaker, Author and Food Futurist**

'Sarah Gray cuts through the confusion with clarity, compassion and clinical know-how. This is the guide I wish every woman had in her hands the moment (or even before) perimenopause begins. It's smart, accessible and genuinely empowering – grounded in science, but never overwhelming. With its structured, holistic approach and real-world case studies, *It's Not You, It's Perimenopause* doesn't just inform – it gives women a roadmap back to feeling like themselves again.'

**—Elizabeth Barbalich, BSc Biology, MBA,
Qualified Naturopath, Founder & CEO of Antipodes® skincare**

‘The heart of good healthcare is a desire to make a positive impact on a human being. That is Sarah Gray. Sarah is passionate about excellence in the science of health, founded by ethics and evidence. In this, she puts the person at the centre of her work. That is why this book is important. *It’s Not You, It’s Perimenopause* is an evidenced-based dive into navigating the transformative years for some of the most special people in the world – the women in our lives.’

**—Dr. Dinesh Palipana OAM, doctor, lawyer,
Queensland Australian of the Year, and author**

‘Sarah Gray has written the ultimate guide to navigating perimenopause with clarity, compassion, and confidence. Equal parts science and soul, this book demystifies what’s happening to your body and gives you practical tools to feel like yourself again. Honest, relatable, and empowering, this is the must-have companion for every woman entering this transformative stage of life.’

**—Kelly Irving, Book Coach, Editor and Founder
of the Expert Author Community**

‘*It’s Not You, It’s Perimenopause* is an outstanding, science-based guide for women navigating midlife changes. Sarah blends clinical expertise with practical advice, offering clear, actionable steps without the confusion that often surrounds this life stage. I especially value her focus on gut health, an often overlooked but critical piece of the peri-puzzle, particularly for women seeking a lifestyle-first approach. With her engaging tone and evidence-based strategies, this book empowers women to take control of their health in a way that feels achievable and sustainable.’

**—Nicole Dynan, Leading Gut Health Dietitian,
Speaker & Media Commentator**

‘Sarah’s dual expertise in both pharmacy and nutrition places her in a uniquely credible position, immediately earning the reader’s trust. In *It’s Not You, It’s Perimenopause*, she offers an engaging, accessible, and empowering read. With a practical, easy-to-digest format, Sarah thoughtfully guides readers through the physical aspects of perimenopause – particularly the power of nourishment through food – while also addressing the often-overlooked emotional and mental shifts. From mindfulness to movement, her holistic approach offers a reassuring and relatable companion through this transformative life stage.’

**—Kelly Michelakis, Founder of The Hellenic Odyssey
and an advocate of the Mediterranean diet**

‘In *It’s Not You, It’s Perimenopause*, Sarah Gray delivers a goldmine of information, and practical strategies for women, and their loved ones, who are navigating perimenopause. Sarah’s unique background in pharmacy and nutrition makes this book refreshingly clear, delivering information that is scientifically sound, and practical strategies that are genuinely helpful. I particularly enjoyed the use of case studies to help build connection; I am sure many of us can see some of ourselves in Sophia! This book is the perfect companion for women seeking real, effective support through this stage of life.’

**—Chloe McLeod, Founder & Speaker,
Advanced Sports Dietitian and media spokesperson**

‘If you are looking for science based answers to understanding perimenopause and menopause this book will definitely help you. Sarah shares stories to relate to and tips to help guide you through this tricky stage of life with a no fad, evidenced based approach.’

**—Simone Austin, Advanced Sports Dietitian, author, media
spokesperson, speaker and public health advocate**

'It's Not You, It's *Perimenopause* is such a trustworthy and practical resource for anyone managing perimenopause. I love that it's based on solid science and evidence but written in a really approachable way that makes it easy to take action. The real standout for me is the case studies and the thread of Sophia's story throughout – they bring the lived experience to life and will help many readers feel less alone and truly seen. It's so refreshing to see the focus on lifestyle changes alongside supplements and medical support. It's such a well-rounded, balanced guide – a must-read!'

—Sonya Lovell, Speaker, Podcast Host and Advocate

It's Not You

**IT'S PERI
MENOPAUSE**

SARAH GRAY

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The Kind Press acknowledges all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Custodians of Country and recognises their continuing connection to land, sea, culture and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

For further information visit the author's website at
www.thenutritionpharmacist.com

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *It's Not You, It's Perimenopause*, your trusted guide when it comes to dealing with troublesome midlife symptoms caused by hormonal changes. I wrote this book to help women like you navigate all the shifts that come with perimenopause. You no longer have to suffer in silence and overwhelm.



SOPHIA hears the alarm clock and lifts her heavy head off the pillow to face yet another grinding day in the Lowe household. Here goes. Time to get Zoe ready for school, feed the dogs, serve breakfast, wave hubby goodbye and maybe fit in a quick thirty-minute cardio workout – otherwise imagine what her midline would look like. After three deep breaths, she rises to an argument from headstrong Zoe and barking pups desperately wanting their morning freedom. No wonder she is exhausted before the day has begun.

In the words of Dr Jason, ‘you are tired all the time because you are too busy’. HR can be such a draining job, and this is probably the icing on the cake in a hectic lifestyle that feels devoid of any self-care or enjoyment. What is it they say? *Life starts at 40. Yeah, right.*

After rushing around all morning, Sophia takes a moment to guzzle down a superfood smoothie her Pilates instructor swears by. *It tastes gross!* But if this is the price to pay to get her body of

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ten years ago back, she will do it. Her smoothie is the perfect fluid vehicle to help slip down the array of colourful vitamin pills, as well as a liquid herbal tonic that is supposed to help control her sugar cravings. Didn't seem to help last night as she devoured half a block of chocolate. *Felt like a good idea at the time.*

Time to walk to the station and head to the office. *Must get those 10,000 steps up.* On the train, Sophia has some 'me time' and thinks about how she is feeling. Her eyes close as she feels a wave of fatigue so intense she could lie down between the seats and have a nap. This happens at least three times a day, but no need to worry, Dr Jase seems to think it's 'normal at your age'. And what about those wild mood fluctuations? One minute she feels calm and in control, next minute she is in a flood of tears and rage, like when Chris moved her phone charger last night. *But that is super annoying.*

She thinks about her waistline as her once-loose work trousers dig in against her soft flesh, actually causing a bit of pain. But there is NO way she will be buying a size up. She is already two sizes up from last year. Maybe this cardio routine, superfood regime and endless vitamins are not really helping? Sophia takes a deep breath, closes her eyes and thinks, *I'll do whatever it takes to feel like my old self again, no matter the cost.* She looks up and notices she missed her station for the office. *Great, another day in the glorious life of Sophia. Let's go.*

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Meet Sophia. I write more about her throughout this book. She's a fictional character representing the collection of women I have helped over the years. Did some of her story resonate with you? At your wits' end with perimenopause symptoms with no viable solutions in sight? All too often, I hear stories like Sophia's and I'm sure this is the same for you.

INTRODUCTION

It's time to take control back of our health so we can prosper, even when it feels like nothing really makes a difference.

Even when we think, *maybe this is all in my head?* I can assure you it's not. For us women, middle age comes with a unique group of challenges. All of a sudden, our bodies feel different, and we begin to wonder if this is the way it will be from now on.

Have you noticed more belly fat, despite not really changing your diet or exercise?

Have you noticed less tone in your muscles, even though you are exercising more?

Have you noticed wild fluctuations in mood, or more frequent bouts of sweating, brain fog and fatigue?

Perhaps your period is arriving unexpectedly after not coming for months, or you're back to the same level of period pain as when you were at school?

No doubt some, or maybe all these things, sound familiar. If so, you can rest assured that other women of a similar age are also experiencing these shifts. It's a new phase of life, perimenopause. Part of the privilege of ageing is to witness changes like this in your body over time.

Let's be honest, there's no sugarcoating it, this is hard. It's hard to feel like someone else in your own skin. It's hard to feel out of control when it comes to feelings of rage, anger and sadness – all in a few minutes. It's even harder when no one can explain why you feel this way, especially when you read about it and it feels like you have to be a scientist to understand it all. You may have even considered hiring an assistant to keep track of all the suggested diet changes, supplements, exercise and more. All the while, it's difficult to feel alone, isolated and lost when it comes to what to do next, who to ask, and more importantly, who you can trust when it comes to advice. While many symptoms and emotions are likely inevitable, you do not have to suffer alone or in silence.

There are science-based solutions that can help you feel like you again. There's also light ahead. Perimenopause is a life phase – it's not forever – lasting on average around four to eight years.

Like Sophia, have you questioned why this is all happening and seemingly all at once? In a snapshot, most symptoms can be linked to changes in hormone levels as you age. It all starts with a drop in the key hormone progesterone (your body makes less), together with wildly fluctuating oestrogen. This triggers a range of symptoms that leave you feeling, well, let's say, far from the best version of you.

It may be comforting to realise you are not alone. A community, albeit a silent one, of women around you is feeling the same. Medical publications state that perimenopause starts in your 40s. But in reality, women can experience symptoms from their mid-30s. It's estimated that almost 7 million women in Australia are peri-menopausal or menopausal. Around 2 million of those women report moderate to severe symptoms that impact their quality of life. So, next time you're out for a ladies' lunch, don't be afraid to open up. Together you can support each other. Research backs this up. A strong sense of community and connectedness is beneficial for mental and physical wellbeing.

WHAT MAKES THIS BOOK DIFFERENT FROM OTHERS

Five years ago, hardly anyone had even heard the word perimenopause. Now it is part of everyday vernacular, and that, my friends, is a great thing. More awareness leads to more support, resources, conversations and progression. But it can also lead to misinformation, overwhelm and confusion, as you are served up too many solutions that seem complex, expensive and sometimes contradictory. Should you try intermittent fasting? Or did you just read that it might not be good for middle-aged women after all? What about magnesium? Does it cure every single symptom of perimenopause? Or is it all just hype? And then there's the ongoing debate about Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT). Is it safe or not?

After spending over twenty-five years in the health and wellness industry, I have seen it all. Confusion often leads people to dismiss everything. Most information is too scientific for us to understand and know what to do next. Many of the women who come to me for help have already given up, feel defeated, accept they need to push through this phase or are hoping it just goes away. So, despite there being an abundance of books, articles, social media pages, podcasts and more, many women are suffering on a daily basis.

This book is different.

You don't need a science degree to understand it, a bank loan to fund the remedies, or an extra day in the week to implement all the tactics. The information is easy to digest and always science-based. It will:

1. Help you identify and understand your most troublesome symptoms such as midline weight gain, brain fog, mood swings, changes to your period, hot flushes and night sweats, trouble sleeping, vaginal dryness, decreased libido and joint pain.
2. Leave you with a personalised perimenopause Action Plan that is easy to implement and actually works.

My hope is that by the end of this book, you will feel like you are entering a new phase of life. With my vast experience as a uniquely qualified pharmacist and nutritionist, I personally guide you through perimenopause. I have spent over two decades helping women understand more about their health, and I arm you with the confidence you need to navigate your health journey like a boss! Using my experience and learnings, I have developed a unique approach that actually has a noticeable impact on your life and wellbeing. The tactics in this book draw upon all areas of my experience and knowledge, and everything shared is evidence-based. No fad diets or fast fixes. Strap yourself in for a fun-filled, realistic ride that helps you better manage perimenopause symptoms, whatever they may be in your case.

Through small and impactful changes to diet and lifestyle and with the role of supplements to support in reaching your goals, I leave you with true insight about the way supplements work, the evidence, and how you can maximise your choices to reap the benefits. No more wasting money on an expensive pee! I also

WHAT MAKES THIS BOOK DIFFERENT FROM OTHERS

guide you on the many benefits of HRT, and how you can open a conversation with your doctor, if appropriate for you.

So, if you've ever found yourself staring at the mega aisle of supplements at the supermarket, if you've ever been lured in by an influencer who eliminated hot flushes with a herbal tonic, or if you've simply thrown caution to the wind and purchased that magnesium supplement in the hope your belly fat will disappear in days, or debated with your friends about the safety of HRT, well, this is the book for you. Now before I go on, I have to say, it's not all doom and gloom. The positive? There are many nutritional tactics, supplements, treatments and lifestyle approaches that have evidence to show they help alleviate perimenopause symptoms. Let's hero those that have evidence, and tread with caution where the evidence is lacking or yet to emerge. Let's completely avoid anything with zero evidence, despite what the fancy packaging and Instagram page are selling you.

News flash! This is not a weight-loss book. It's Not You, It's *Perimenopause* is designed to help you conquer troublesome perimenopause symptoms. If weight loss is a goal, then that's for you, but if you want sound sleep, better energy levels or less brain fog, then you will work towards that. So, get yourself a cuppa, sit back, and enjoy the ride. It's time to take back your power and thrive in perimenopause.

While you have probably tried what seems like every path that exists to see change with no success, I want to assure you there are evidence-based tactics you can implement every day to see noticeable results.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

In Chapter 1, you learn about what is happening to your body during perimenopause. This provides a nice baseline to help understand why you are experiencing symptoms, respecting that your body is handling a lot for you as change happens.

In Chapter 2, you complete a self-assessment quiz to determine what is causing you the most distress, then gauge what stage you're at on the perimenopause journey.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 showcase my recommended tactics when it comes to nutrition, lifestyle and supplements, guiding you on the science-backed tactics to weave into your daily life to alleviate symptoms and feel like yourself again.

In Chapter 6, you create your very own perimenopause Action Plan, using science-backed solutions to manage those symptoms.

When you see an Action Step, it is a cue to pause, a key step to take, even if you have time to do nothing else. This helps propel you forward and increases the chances of success.

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Throughout the pages, you'll read client stories that are fictionalised, based on my real cases with identifying names and some details changed to protect privacy.

YOU CAN FEEL LIKE YOURSELF AGAIN

It's time to manage the symptoms of perimenopause by walking through the processes so you can thrive. With your dedication to prioritising your health and making changes in a consistent and kind way, you will feel better. Change does take time and by applying these small and clever tactics, your body will start to flourish.

Close your eyes for a moment.

Imagine that you feel light, energetic, happy and confident.

Your daily brain fog has subsided.

You have the energy to exercise, socialise and enjoy life.

What once seemed impossible is now achievable.

You see changes in your body and mind that you've yearned for.

The noisy clutter of food groups to eliminate, and supplements and health trends to jump on, all fades into the distance.

It's time to create your unique Action Plan, where you feel like you again.

Part I

UNDERSTANDING THE FUNDAMENTALS

Perimenopause is a time when everything changes and often without warning, when life is already filled with commitments, family, work and day-to-day tasks. It's also an important time to acknowledge that the body is undergoing change within.

Perimenopause is a major life transition. To appreciate that statement some more, it's good to get a handle on the main aspects, while not needing to be an absolute expert. This helps with acceptance and allows us to show kindness to the changes in this major life transitional phase. This is why we begin Part I by focusing on the fundamentals. Knowledge brings power. Once you understand the fundamentals, you can see why you need to change the operating rhythm across nutrition and lifestyle to support your body through to the other side. It's also key for getting a handle on the common threads of symptoms that are causing the most life disturbance. We do that with a quick self-assessment quiz. In this part, you plan and build upon a personal Action Plan. You not only assess where you're at now, but you set clear goals to work towards which will also be a measure for how you're feeling on the other side of the process where you can thrive in midlife and beyond.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

SARAH GRAY is one of Australia's leading dual-qualified health professionals in pharmacy and nutrition, holding a Bachelor of Pharmacy (with Honours) from Monash University and a Master of Human Nutrition from Deakin University. She is a registered pharmacist with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA), a registered nutritionist with the Nutrition Society of Australia, and a MyMT™ Certified Menopause Lifestyle Practitioner.

With over 25 years of experience in the health and wellness industry, her holistic approach focuses on supplements and science-based solutions for perimenopause and menopause. Sarah has developed a proven framework for implementing science-based solutions to manage the symptoms of perimenopause. Her philosophy is based on the multifactorial nature of health – being made up of the foods you eat, medicines or supplements you take, and how you move and look after your body and mind. A trusted thought leader, Sarah has appeared on Channel 10's *My Market Kitchen* and is a recognised voice across radio, print, digital media and podcasts. She is also a regular contributor to leading podcasts, health blogs and publications.

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