

Menopause & Me



A practical guide to managing your symptoms.

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Summer 2023



Menopause Facts

- Perimenopause starts in early to mid 40s.
- 1 in 100 have it below age of 40
- 1 in 1000 have it below age of 30
- All of us will get symptoms: 15% mild; 60% moderate and 25% severe symptoms.

"Peri-menopause and menopause should be treated as the rites of passage that they are. If not celebrated, then at least accepted and acknowledged and honored." Gillian Anderson

Menopause: the ceasing of menstruation usually between the ages of 45—50.

Although it can happen earlier.

Our lack of knowledge about our bodies and how they work needs to be addressed hopefully this will help you understand what is happening to you and how to get support and advice.

What is the menopause?

Stages of the Menopause.

Facts & myths

The menopause will happen to every woman, some will have mild symptoms, the majority will have mild to moderate and around 25% will have severe symptoms. The 1st stage of the menopause is perimenopause which usually starts in early to mid-forties, you are classified as being in the menopause when you have not had

a period for 12 months. We can't ignore it and we should be more positive about this stage of our lives, in other cultures this time in a women's life is celebrated. Therefore your symptoms start in your early 40's. Some women due to medical reasons will experience the menopause early and this means they will have a slightly different treatment plan.

For the purposes of this book we will refer to women going through the menopause in the 40's. Menopause is a natural, normal transition that we all go through and IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE AWFUL!

First Symptoms

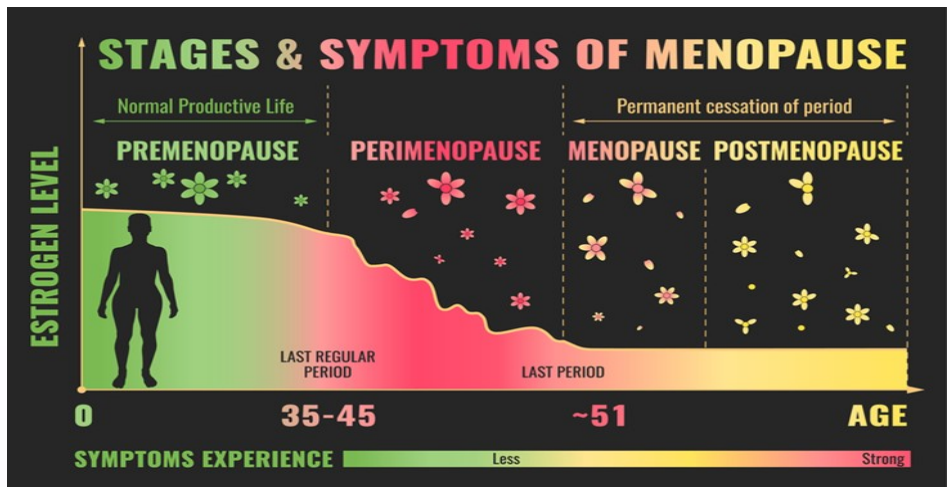
You will first start noticing issues with your periods, flow, duration, cramps, etc. You may also see a change in mood not enjoying things like you used to.

Resources

Websites:

[Menopause Experts | Award-Winning Resources For Women](#)

[Menopause Matters, menopausal symptoms, remedies, advice](#)



MENOPAUSE

The menopause is a transition, not a one off and something that can last between 4—10 years, the average is 8 years. It is not an illness although it can lead to complications in some cases. The menopause impacts on women physically, psychological and emotionally.

But the good news is that we are talking about it, raising awareness helps immensely—sharing our experiences, understanding what is happening to us, talking about it, eliminates fear and empowers us to take charge of our health.

We first start to feel the effects of the menopause in our early 40's. it takes us longer to recover from a night out or an illness, sleep becomes an issue, low mood, period issues, etc.

Our hormones play a very important part in our health, this is just not about our reproductive system but how our hormones impact our mental & physical systems. And these levels do not decline in an orderly fashion!! They go up and down and this can have a devastating impact on us and those around us.

But there is always hope



HRT

In 2023 there are still shortages of HRT and hopefully this will be addressed by end of year.

Hormone Intolerance

Some women can have an intolerance to certain hormones for most it could be an intolerance to progestogen.

Understanding your body

Menopause usually happens to us in our 40's and it is a transition. Know what are your triggers for symptoms.

Is it when you are stressed?

Is it when you eat or drink certain things?



What do they do?

Hormones are really important for mental and physical health. The main hormones are estrogen (this is the biggy), progesterone and testosterone. These hormones work together in a complex relationship, but as they decline we experience menopausal symptoms.

Hormones are chemical messengers produced in our bodies to regulate the activity of tissues and organs. They regulate the body's growth, metabolism, sexual development, and function.

Our female hormones and the glands that secrete them are part of an incredibly sensitive glandular system known as the endocrine system.

Estrogen is a steroid hormone that actually appears in four different forms in our body at different stages of reproductive readiness or pregnancy. We are going to concentrate on what happens during menopause.

We have estrogen receptors all over our body. This is what it does:

- Promotes breast tissue growth and lactation, uterine growth, and production of the womb lining
- Regulates our menstrual cycle
- Thickens and lubricates the vaginal wall
- Accelerates metabolism
- Influences how and where fat is stored
- Grows and maintains skin, bone, and tissues throughout the body, including cellular repair in the brain
- Keeps blood cells healthy and promotes high levels of 'good' blood fats while reducing levels of 'bad' blood fats
- Assists balance of fluid and salts
- Works in tandem with testosterone to increase sex drive
- Connects with other chemicals that enable brain cells to function efficiently

Sleep Issues

Not being able to sleep is one of the biggest issues that we encounter at our sessions. Having disturbed sleep can impact you physically and mentally the next day and the cumulative effects can lead to major medical is-

Sleep Hygiene

1. Set a bed time and stick to it
2. No media in bedroom, put phones on airplane mode.
3. Magnesium before bed either tablet, spray or bath.
4. Sleep meditation useful apps Calm.
5. Make sure room is cool.



What do they do?

Progesterone is known as the pregnancy hormone but it also has a role to play in our overall health.

What does it do:

- Eases anxiety
- Helps us go to sleep and stay asleep
- Important as it works in conjunction with estrogen to protect our bladder and uterine health.
- Helps build bones
- Promotes hair growth and smoothes skin

Yes, we have testosterone and it is very important. All three of these hormones work together to maintain our bodily systems.

Testosterone is responsible for:

- Maintaining energy levels
- Sex drive
- Mood
- Bone health
- Cognitive function.

Top Symptoms

Hot Flashes: this is the most common symptom but do you know that around 25% experience chills!

Top tips Menopause at Work

Does your company have a policy?
How do you access it? Is there a named person to speak to?

Menopause at Work

Plan your day—we are generally more alert and can deal with more complex tasks.

Take breaks from your screen and desk move around at least once an hour.

Have some 'energy snacks' (fruit/nuts/yogurt) to manage energy during the day.

Difficulty getting motivated? Break down tasks into smaller chunks and set a timer (Pomodoro Method).

Be kind to yourself and others, this is a transition.

A List of Menopause Symptoms

Physical symptoms

- Hair loss
- Weight gain
- Brittle nails
- Vaginal dryness
- Sleep disorders
- Dizziness
- Incontinence
- Allergies
- Breast pain
- Headaches
- Joint pain
- Itchy skin
- Irregular periods
- Irregular heartbeat
- Osteoporosis

Psychological symptoms

- Mood swings
- Fatigue
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Difficulty concentrating
- Memory lapses
- Loss of libido

Digestive symptoms

- Bloating
- Digestive problems

Vasomotor symptoms

- Changes in body odor
- Hot flashes
- Night sweats

Oral symptoms

- Burning tongue
- Gum problems

Nervous system symptoms

- Electric shock sensations
- Tingling extremities



There are over 40 symptoms its impact is physical, psychological, and emotional. This Symptom Tracker is an important tool when diagnosing the menopause. The most common symptoms are Hot Flashes, Night Sweats, insomnia, psychological issues, etc.

According to the latest research from Menopasue at Work 2021:

- 94% said that their symptoms had a negative impact on work
- 51% reduced their hours
- 19% changed job/role

A Symptom Tracker can help you understand what symptoms you have, how often they are occurring, what is their severity and is there a pattern to them. This is a useful thing to do for yourself but it is also very important for when you visit your GP or HCP as having an accurate list of symptoms will help with your diagnosis and treatment options.

There is a Symptom Tracker in the appendix and you can also download the Balance App from [Balance - Balance app \(balance-menopause.com\)](https://www.balance-menopause.com) this website also has loads of information on the Menopause and HRT.

HRT

There are still difficulties in accessing HRT depending on where you live. To access a Menopause Specialist or an NHS Menopause Clinics: check out British Menopause Society at [British Menopause Society | For healthcare professionals and others specialising in post reproductive health \(thebms.org.uk\)](https://www.thebms.org.uk)

Information on HRT

Dr Annice Mukherjee: Professor of Endocrine @the.hormone.doc (Instagram). The Complete Guide to the Menopause.

Dr Jen Gunter: OB/GYN @drjengunter (Instagram). The Menopause Manifesto.

Both of these Doctors are experts in women's health and both have gone through the Menopause. Dr Annice is a breast cancer survivor and she is very informative about HRT the pros & cons.

Taking any medication should be the result of 'informed decision' between the patient and the Dr.



Hormone Replacement Therapy is a treatment that relieves your symptoms by replacing estrogen that your body loses during the menopause. All forms of HRT contain estrogen which works to alleviate symptoms such as: hot flushes, mood changes, and urinary symptoms. It comes in two types: Estrogen only and Combined (containing a synthetic version of progesterone).

Estrogen only: the most commonly used is 17-beta estradiol.

Combined HRT: this is estrogen plus a version of progestogen.

What is best?

Estrogen only HRT should only be proscribed if you have a hysterectomy. If you still have a uterus it is important that progestogen is combined with estrogen. Which type you are prescribed depends on a range of factors and this decision is taken with your Doctor. How you take HRT varies and depends on personal choice and what is the best fit.

How to take it?

There are a variety of ways to take HRT, tablet, patches, gels, creams, etc. Taking HRT trans dermally (through the skin) has been proven to be more effective and have less side effects.

Pros & Cons

HRT has been shown to reduce symptoms and it has also been shown to reduce risk of: **Cardiovascular disease;** **Osteoporosis;** and possibly **Dementia.**

The risks of HRT were first highlighted in a 2002 Study (this has now been acknowledged as flawed). Studies show that 1 in 8 will get **Breast cancer** it depends on medical history genetics and lifestyle. Other studies have shown an increase risk of **Clots and Strokes** due to taking the **oral tablet** as it must be processed through the liver. HRT delivered through patches, gels, etc does not.

Top Symptoms

Hot Flushes: this is the most common symptom but do you know that around 25% experience chills!

Top tip

We need to keep hydrated, so we need to drink more fluids especially water. This helps us physically and more importantly it helps with our cognition.

Resources

These are some great podcasts about Menopause:

Menopause & Me Podcast

Menopause Matters podcast

Black Girls Guide to menopause podcast.

Going to the Doctor

There are a variety of ways to take HRT, therefore research the options and have a frank discussion with a GP or preferably a Menopause Specialist (either Doctor or a nurse) so that you can make the decision that is best for you and your lifestyle.

Appointment

1. For most people their first appointment will be with their GP (TIP: book a double appointment) ask if they have someone who specializes in the menopause in the surgery.
2. Use the symptom tracker and go through each symptom you have and discuss the severity, length and frequency of symptoms. This is important as it will help with prognosis.
3. List any medications you are taking including herbal and supplements.
4. Ask for a referral to NHS Menopause Clinic (in your area). Check out British Menopause Society website for clinics and Menopause specialists in your area.
5. Ask questions about treatment plans. You should be seen every 3 months (NICE Guidelines) if you take HRT (to monitor it and make sure the dosage is right).

Alternative & Herbal Treatments

Alternative therapies have been around for a long time. Herbal medicines are natural but they can be harmful you should always consult a qualified specialist. And it is important to remember that they can interact with prescribe medicines. The herbal medicines listed below have all been evidenced through peer reviewed studies.

Black Cohosh: is a SERM (selective estrogen receptor modulator) it stimulates estrogen receptors in some parts of the body—brain and bones. There is some evidence that it helps with brain fog.

Agnus Castus: balances hormones especially effective in perimenopausal stage. It works through its action on pituitary gland increases progesterone production. Used to treat Hot Flushes, palpitations & insomnia.

Isoflavones: a type of phytoestrogens which are compounds similar to estrogen we produce. Found in Red Clover; soy; flax seeds; lentils and oats. Ingredients and quality can vary from product to product. Used for Hot Flushes, insomnia, mood and vaginal dryness.

Gut health

The gut—brain connection is very important for our physical health and our mental health. Having a healthy gut helps us absorb our food (and supplements) better. And we can create serotonin in our gut!

How to improve our Gut health.

We need to eat a well-balanced 'rainbow' diet. We also need to feed the good bacteria in our gut.

Pre-biotics: are plant based fibres that are used to feed your good gut bacteria. Such as: garlic, onions, bananas, apples, oats, leeks, etc.

Pro-biotics: are live microorganisms that help restore the gut bacteria. Such as: kefir, 'live' yogurt, apple cider vinegar, sourdough bread, kombucha, etc.

Why would my gut health be poor?

Stress can really impact our health and impact our ability to have good bacteria. After an illness or certain medications can also effect our gut health.

Alternative Treatments

Acupuncture is a traditional Chinese medicine practice of inserting fine needles at specific points in the body. This method restores the body's 'Qi' or energy flow. The method practiced in UK stimulates the nervous system and is mainly used to treat musculoskeletal pain. NICE recommends acupuncture for migraines and chronic headaches; some women have reported that acupuncture has helped with menopausal symptoms.

Aromatherapy is a complementary therapy that uses oils extracted from plants to promote relaxation and wellbeing. Oils can be added to water and burned to release the smell, added to carrier oils and massaged directly onto skin or put into bath. Using oils can relieve stress and promote wellbeing.

Floatation therapy is that is done in a sensory deprivation tank or bath, it is filled with Epsom Salts (which contains magnesium!!!). This type of therapy is very good for muscle tension, joint pain, anxiety, mood, stress etc.

Supplements

Vitamin B Complex: is used for mood, anxiety, irritability, poor concentration. You can get from such foods as: meat, seafood, dairy products, legumes, leafy greens, seeds, etc.

Vitamin C: for Hot flushes, skin elasticity. You can get it from: citrus fruits, peppers, strawberries, blackcurrants, blackberries, potatoes, broccoli, etc.

Vitamin D: for mood, bones, immunity, brain health and heart health (everyone needs this! Especially from October to March we need to take extra). You can get it from oily fish, eggs, soy products and mushrooms. You can also take it in tablet or injection.

Omega 3: is for fatigue, hair loss, depression, dry eyes, motivation and aching joints. You can get it from: fish, seafood, nuts, flax seeds, chia seeds, walnuts, etc.

Magnesium: is for sleep, bones, aching muscles and mood. You can get it from: green leafy vegetables, legumes, nuts, seeds, and whole grains.

Calcium: for bones, teeth, hair, nails. It is also needed for heart health and proper functioning of nervous system. You can get it from cabbage, broccoli, sesame seeds, soy, pulses, & dried fruit.

We should really be getting this from our diet but due to the way we lived that might not be possible. Therefore make sure that the supplements that you use are of good quality.

Remember the Menopause is a transition, we are entering a new period in our lives and it can be great, but it can also be really scary and daunting.

Understanding what is happening, researching what you are going through. And talk about this, normalize this. We are likely to live a third of our lives post menopausal. I want to be fit enough to enjoy it. Now is the time to try new things!!

Ans remember Be Kind to yourself and others x

Remember to follow on LinkedIn & Instagram

Remember this is your Second Spring!



MenopauseSpring.Com

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