



# *The* **Menopause**

**A guide to symptoms  
and how to support  
women experiencing  
the menopause**

# What is the Menopause?



All women experience menopause, usually between the ages of 45–55. This is when their periods finish due to the fluctuating and ultimately falling hormone levels. Often the menopause is accompanied by uncomfortable symptoms, which are a result of lowering levels of estrogen.

## Managing symptoms

**Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)** replaces the missing estrogen, which often causes menopause symptoms. HRT is extremely effective at relieving menopausal symptoms. It is available as tablets, patches, a gel or spray.

**Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)** helps people develop practical ways of managing symptoms and providing new coping skills. CBT can improve wellbeing in general, but can help manage menopausal symptoms such as anxiety, stress, low mood, hot flushes, night sweats and poor sleep.

**Eating a healthy, balanced diet and exercising regularly** to help maintain a healthy weight, whilst building more exercise into your daily routine can improve some menopausal symptoms and benefit long term health.

### Complimentary therapies

are often advertised for treating menopausal symptoms. We recommend you speak to your pharmacist or GP for advice before trying herbal remedies.

**There are lots of options** for treating vaginal dryness including vaginal estrogen cream, tablet, pessary, gel or ring, as well as lubricants or moisturisers. Please consult a health professional to decide on the most appropriate treatment for you.

### Supplements

The most effective way to obtain essential nutrients is through a balanced diet; however, it is important for everyone to consider taking vitamin D supplements. There is little research to suggest that specific supplements can help menopausal symptoms.

# Top Tips

## for Support

- ✓ **Listen:** ask about how they feel and what they are going through.
- ✓ **Encourage:** if they have low self-esteem, encouragement may help them to feel empowered and uplifted.
- ✓ **Ask** your partner to help you understand their symptoms.

“

**...Talk about it, be open about it, laugh about it if you can. I find humour helps quite a lot...**

Sally Crowe  
Crofter,  
Caithness

”

## Myth Busters

- X **“HRT is bad for you”** – Whilst HRT is not for everyone, it aims to replace estrogen which becomes low during the menopause transition.
- X **“Menopause just happens in your 50s”** – Menopause can happen at any age, for most women it happens 45-55 years of age.
- X **HRT & Contraception** – HRT is not contraceptive and contraception may still be needed during the menopause transition.
- X **“Everyone gets Hot Flashes”** – Most women, but not all, experience symptoms which vary from person to person and they can begin months or years before your periods stop.
- X **“You only get physical symptoms”** – Menopause can also impact your emotions and your thinking.
- X **“Men don’t need to know about menopause”** – the more men know about menopause, the better they can support the women in their lives.

## Man Cave

**Things men ought to know...**

- **BE AWARE** that her symptoms are not within her control.
- **LEARN** about the symptoms she may be experiencing.
- **SHOW** you care, your love and support is so important as many women feel lost and lonely at this time.
- **TALK:** make time to discuss how the menopause is affecting your relationship
- **ENCOURAGE** your partner to seek help regarding her symptoms

# The Menopause & your body



## Symptom Checker



### Psychological and Emotional symptoms

- Changes in your mood
- Being more irritable or anxious
- Changes to your confidence
- Changes to your memory
- Feeling tense or nervous
- Feeling excitable
- Attacks of panic
- Difficulty in concentrating
- Feeling unhappy or depressed
- Crying spells
- Irritability
- Loss of interest in most things
- Brain Fog



### Bone Health

- In healthy bone, before menopause, the production of new bone is in balance with the removal of old bone. The balance changes after menopause when ovaries stop the production of the hormone **estrogen**. This leads to increased removal of bone which decreases bone strength.
- Hormone replacement therapy in menopause is very effective in maintaining bone health. For some women, **prevention or treatment of osteoporosis may be the main reason for taking HRT.**

### Physiological symptoms



- Palpitations - or your heart racing fast
- Sweats
- Flushing
- Night sweats
- Unable/difficulty to sleep
- Headaches
- Joint pains
- Tiredness
- Hair thinning
- Joint and muscle aches
- Dry skin
- Sensation of crawling in skin (formication)
- Dry eyes

Have you experienced any of these symptoms?



### Heart Health

- Heart risk increases with menopause. If menopause happens at an early age (below the age of 45) or particularly if under the age of 40, the risk of cardiovascular disease is significantly increased.
- Use of menopausal hormone therapy for women with premature and early menopause, is recommended to reduce the risks of heart disease, but all women should be aware of increased risk during the menopause transition and focus on a healthy heart diet and lifestyle.



### Urinary symptoms

- Change in passing urine more frequently or urgently
- Repeated urinary infections
- Stress incontinence



### Vulva/Vaginal symptoms

- Irritation
- Dryness
- Soreness or Burning



### Sex symptoms

- Painful intercourse (having sex) or smear tests
- Blood after sex/smear
- Loss of interest in sex



### Bleeding/Periods

- Changes to your bleeding pattern with spotting, irregular, heavy or missed periods

**Talk to your GP  
and check out these  
helpful resources...**

**Menopause  
matters**

**Menopause Matters**

[www.menopausematters.co.uk](http://www.menopausematters.co.uk)

Women's  
Health  
Concern

**Women's Health Concern**

[www.womens-health-concern.org](http://www.womens-health-concern.org)

British  
Menopause  
Society

**The British Menopause  
Society (BMS)**

[www.thebms.org.uk](http://www.thebms.org.uk)

NHS  
inform

**Women's Health  
Platform on NHS Inform**

[www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/womens-health](http://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/womens-health)

**If you are concerned about yourself or  
someone else, talk to someone.**

Contact **your doctor, RSABI** (24-hours):  
0808 123 4555, **Breathing Space**: 0800 838 587  
or **Samaritans** (24-hours): 116 123

**How's  
it going?**

Check in on your own wellbeing using  
Farmstrong's online resource:  
[www.farmstrongscotland.org.uk/  
how-s-it-going](http://www.farmstrongscotland.org.uk/how-s-it-going)

**FARM STRONG**  
Scotland

[www.farmstrongscotland.org.uk](http://www.farmstrongscotland.org.uk)



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