Menopause

The menopause happens to all women at some point in your life. The menopause is when a woman stops having **periods** and has not had a period for 12 months. The menopause is a natural part of ageing that usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, as your hormone levels decline.

You can go through the menopause earlier. You may have menopause symptoms for months or years, before you go through the full menopause.

What is the menopause?

The menopause is caused by a change in the balance of the body's sex hormones, which happens as you get older. This is when your ovaries stop producing as much of the hormone oestrogen and no longer release an egg each month. This means you can no longer get pregnant naturally. The average age of the natural menopause is 51 years old, but it can happen much earlier or later.

Premature or early menopause can occur at any age.

The menopause can happen naturally or following treatment such as, chemotherapy or radiotherapy, or when the ovaries are removed. This is often carried out as part of a hysterectomy.

Read more about the menopause from the NHS.

Signs and symptoms

Menopausal symptoms can begin months or even years before a woman's periods stop (perimenopause) and last around 4 years after your last period. However some women experience symptoms for much longer. They can impact upon your daily life. The most common symptoms include:

- hot flushes
- night sweats
- vaginal dryness and irritation (including **discomfort during sex**)
- difficulty sleeping (insomnia)
- **low mood, depression** or **anxiety**
- reduced sex drive (libido)
- difficulty with memory or concentrating

- needing to wee (urinate) more often

Perimenopause

Perimenopause is when you have symptoms of the menopause and still have periods. Women start perimenopause at different ages. You may notice signs of progression toward menopause, such as menstrual irregularity, sometime in your 40s. But some women notice changes as early as their mid-30s.

The main treatment for perimenopause is Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT). Speak to your doctor to get help to manage your symptoms.

Early menopause

Early menopause is when you go through the menopause before the age of 45. It's also known as premature menopause. This affects 1% of women. There are a small number of women affected in their 20s or 30s.

Speak to your doctor to get help to manage your symptoms. Women with early or premature menopause are at more of a risk of brittle bones **(osteoporosis).** Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) can help to control symptoms and protect your bones.

The Daisy Network supports women who are going through early menopause. You can find information and online support groups on their website.

Read more about early menopause from NHS.

Testing

Speak to your doctor or GP if you have menopausal symptoms or if you're experiencing symptoms of the menopause before 45 years of age. They can talk to you about your symptoms and confirm if you are menopausal. They may carry out a **blood test** to measure your hormone levels.

You can buy a home testing kit from pharmacies and supermarkets.

Treatment

Your doctor can offer different types of treatment to help to manage your menopause symptoms. These can include, creams, gels, patches, tablets and implants. The treatment available to you will depend on your symptoms, other health conditions that you may have, and if you have a womb (uterus) or not.

You can be referred by your doctor to a Menopause Clinic or you can pay for a private service for specialist support.

Read more about menopause treatment from the NHS.

Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)

There are 3 sex hormones that can be replaced or “topped up” with HRT to help manage your menopause symptoms and protect your body from further issues. These hormones are oestrogen, progesterone and testosterone.

Hormones are available on prescription from your doctor. There are different types and strengths (or doses) available to try. Speak to your doctor to find the best option for you.

HRT can also help to:

- **improve your bone density to reduce the risk of osteoporosis**
- maintain your muscle strength. This can help to avoid falls and injuries

The NHS says “HRT is a safe and effective treatment for most going through menopause and perimenopause. Your GP will discuss any risks with you.” There are some health conditions that may not be suited to HRT, but other options or a lower dose may be available to you Often the benefits of taking HRT are greater than the risks.

Read more about Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) from the NHS.

Paying for prescriptions

To save money when you need regular prescriptions you can buy an annual HRT Prepayment certificate from the NHS. It costs the same as just 2 single prescription charges. The certificate is valid for 12 months, can be used against any listed HRT prescription items that are licensed for the treatment of menopause.

Read more about help with health costs on InformationNOW.

Self help

Eating a balanced diet can help to manage your symptoms. You can try to eat food that are rich in:

- fibre
- omega 3
- magnesium
- vitamin D
- protein

There are non animal food and supplements that can help you to eat a balanced diet. Read more about vegan and vegetarian diets from the NHS.

Staying active

Being active can help with menopause symptoms. On InformationNOW you can find:

- physical and leisure activities
- events and activities in your area
- hobbies
- parks, gardens, forests and woodlands

Read more on InformationNOW about 10 tips for good health.

Mental health

Anxiety and low mood are a common symptom of the menopause. This can be made worse by other menopausal symptoms such as insomnia (problems sleeping). You may be more likely to experience these symptoms if you have faced mental health issues previously or have Premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD).

It can help to talk to someone about your feelings. Speak to your doctor

Newcastle Talking Therapies is a free short term talking therapy service for people over the age of 16, living in Newcastle. If you're freeling low, worried or overwhelmed. Contact them to arrange an appointment.

The Patient Information Centre has a range of free mental health and wellbeing self help guides to download.

Read more on InformationNOW about:

- mental health support in Newcastle
- Support groups

Complementary therapy

Complementary therapies can help to reduce some menopausal symptoms. This includes:

- aromatherapy
- homeopathy
- yoga
- mindfulness, meditation and relaxation

Menopause at work

Your symptoms may impact upon your day to day life. Your employer should make reasonable adjustments to help you to carry on working. Speak to your manager or Human Resources (HR) department to see what support is available to you. Many employers have a menopause policy. You may be able to request a more flexible working pattern, working from home or equipment such as a fan to help keep cool.

You cannot be discriminated at work because of your age of gender. This is explained in The Equality Act 2010. People with menopause symptoms may be protected from less favourable treatment (or discrimination) by the employer. Read more about problems at work on InformationNOW

If your menopause symptoms have a long term or substantial impact on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, it may be considered to be a disability. Read more on InformationNOW about disability rights

Read more about Menopause support in the workplace from the ACAS.

There are Menopause friendly accredited organisations and employers. Use their website to find organisations that have achieved the menopause friendly quality mark.

Other Useful Information

- **Menopause Matters**
- **Women's Health Concern (WHC)**

Other useful organisations

- **Healthtalk.org**
- **NHS 111** is the new telephone service which has replaced NHS Direct. You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is a fast and easy way to get the right help, whatever the time.
- **NHS.UK** is a website providing health and medical advice, an online symptom checker and a facility for searching for services near you.
- Menopause and the workplace | NHS Employers

> **Please note** – The content on this website is provided for general information only, and should not be treated as a substitute for the medical advice of your own doctor or any other health care professional. If you are feeling unwell, make an appointment to see your GP or contact **NHS 111**. In an emergency, dial **999**.

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Useful Organisations

Patient Information Centre – Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust (CNTW)

Website: www.cntw.nhs.uk

Telephone: 0191 246 7288

Address: St Nicholas Hospital, NE3 3XT

Daisy Network

Email: info@daisynetwork.org.uk

Website: www.daisynetwork.org

healthtalk.org

Email: info@healthtalkonline.org

Website: www.healthtalk.org

Women's Health Concern (WHC)

Website: www.womens-health-concern.org

Menopause Matters

Website: www.menopausematters.co.uk

NHS 111

Website: www.nhs.uk/111

NHS Newcastle Talking Therapies

Website: https://www.vitahealthgroup.co.uk/nhs-services/nhs-mental-health/newcastle/

Telephone: 0330 0534 230

Address: Riverview Business Centre, NE4 7YL

Related Articles

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