



Helping you find the positives in menopause

Your guide to surviving and thriving through menopause



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*Life doesn't end with menopause; it's the beginning of a new adventure.
Strap in and enjoy the ride!*

HELEN MIRREN, ACTOR





There are around
13 million
people who are peri or
menopausal in the UK

The menopause journey

Around a third of the entire UK female population is either peri-menopausal or menopausal.

That's a lot of people going through huge hormonal changes that may be difficult to understand who are struggling to manage the myriad of symptoms.

That's why it's so important that we take time to better **understand what it means for our bodies, minds and general wellbeing.**

Menopause is defined as when a person has had no periods for one year or more.

But the symptoms of menopause can start much earlier.

Naturally, the menopause usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age with the average age in the UK being **51**. However, studies show that black women typically start their menopause earlier than white women.

Riding the challenges of menopause out



Menopause usually occurs between **45** and **55**

The average age in the UK is **51**

Early peri-menopause generally occurs around age **45**

The late peri-menopause average age is **49**

The lows won't last forever. Get on board - there is a lot of support out there!

Welcome to peri-menopause

Peri-menopausal symptoms can last months or even years - from irregular, lighter or heavier periods than normal to the 'hidden' symptoms associated with menopause, including mood swings, night sweats, weight gain and insomnia.

Everyone's experience is different, but here's what to expect and when:

- **Early peri-menopause** is when menstrual cycles become infrequent at around 6-7 weeks apart and generally it occurs around age **45**.
- **Late peri-menopause** is defined as when menopausal symptoms become worse and periods are few months apart. The average age is **49**.
- **Surgical menopause** occurs when you've had a hysterectomy and had your ovaries removed.
- **Early menopause in women who are under 45** can be caused by some cancer treatments including radiotherapy, chemotherapy and hormone therapy although it could be temporary.
- **Medical and hormone interventions** can also cause some transgender men and non-binary people to experience menopause.



More than
90%
of postmenopausal
women were never
taught about the
menopause
at school

Where has the young, old me gone?

Menopause disrupts your levels of oestrogen and progesterone. But it can also disrupt your life.

But try not to worry. You're still there. You're still you. And everything you're experiencing is normal. It may be frustrating and scary at times. But it is normal. You may just need a helping hand adjusting to this new chapter.

And the good news - there is a lot of help out there!

A new normal

There are almost **four million women aged 45 to 55 employed in the UK** so you are certainly not alone if you're juggling work and home while moving from symptoms of 'the curse' to 'the change'. In fact, 25% describe their symptoms as **so severe and debilitating that it interferes with their daily life.**

With over 30 physical menopausal symptoms combined with the mental wellbeing side effects, it's no wonder you may feel like you are losing the plot or having a midlife crisis.

You may have good days, better days and bad days. Or you may be lucky to be one of the **10-20% who have no symptoms at all.**

The average age for menopause in the UK is

51

HOT WHEN IT'S COLD?
TIRED AFTER 8 HOURS SLEEP?
WALK INTO A ROOM AND FORGET WHY?
FLY OFF THE HANDLE FOR NO GOOD REASON?
FEEL LIKE YOUR HEART IS BEATING FASTER
- EVEN WHEN SITTING DOWN?
PUT ON POUNDS AFTER A CARB-FREE
WEEK OF SALADS AND SMOOTHIES?
BOOBS BOTHERING YOU?
SOUND FAMILIAR?
YOU'RE NOT ALONE





If you recognise any of these symptoms, you may want to speak to a medical professional about the best way forward to manage them. Ask your GP surgery for an appointment with their menopause specialist.

What to expect

You may experience some or all of these physical symptoms.

- Hot flushes
- Weight gain
- Palpitations
- Fatigue
- Night sweats
- Dizziness
- Headaches
- Recurring UTIs
- Heavy or no periods
- Stiff joints, aches and pains
- Insomnia
- Itchy skin
- Sore breasts
- Hair loss/ growth
- Osteoporosis
- Heart disease
- Vaginal dryness

Emotional and psychological side effects are also common.

- Mood swings
- Loss of self confidence
- Anxiety
- Panic attacks
- Depression
- Reduced concentration
- Loss of libido
- Memory loss
- Forgetfulness
- 'Brain fog'
- Feeling irritable or frustrated
- Feeling you can't cope as well as you used to

Medicinal. Physical. Emotional. Psychological.

Make your menopause more manageable.

Now you know what to expect and when, let's look at ways to make menopause more manageable and less debilitating.

YES, menopause symptoms can have an impact on home, health, relationships and work.

But **NO**, it doesn't mean you have to grin and bear it or lie down in a dark room and take it on your hairy chin. (Yes, that can be another side effect - hair growth where you don't want it and hair loss where you do!)

Help is all around you. At work. Online. Books. TV. Radio. Podcasts. Webinars. Your GP. Self-help. Specialist support groups. Friends and family.

The conversation surrounding the mystery of midlife and menopause is getting louder – by government, medical practitioners, social media influencers and even celebrities are sharing their voice to make change happen.

Your employer has provided this guide to help you on your journey, but you should also enquire about any additional support or employee benefits that you can access through work schemes and services.

You no longer have to suffer the stigma or the symptoms in silence.

Over
66%
of women said
menopausal symptoms
had a mostly negative
impact on them at
work



The change. But for the better.



Here are some of the most useful resources and information to help you through your personal menopause.

Managing menopause with HRT

Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) is the most common medical treatment which replaces the female hormones, oestrogen and progesterone bringing physical and emotional relief to many.

Pick 'n' mix - tablets, patches, pessary, cream, ring, gel or spray?

Local HRT, which is a vaginal oestrogen, can be used to treat those **who only have vaginal dryness or irritation**, but it will not treat other symptoms of the menopause such as hot flushes, mood swings or problems sleeping.

For those of you suffering from a mix of physical and emotional symptoms, your GP will help you decide which mix of oestrogen, progesterone and sometimes testosterone is right for you, based on your symptoms, family history and genetics.

The good news is that HRT can help relieve many physical menopause symptoms, including hot flushes, night sweats and joint pains in a **matter of weeks**.

Although the mood boosting and mental health benefits can take longer, patience pays.

More benefits to HRT than 1,2,3

Another **long-term benefit of HRT** is that it can reduce your risk of hormone-related health problems, including osteoporosis and heart disease.

Although some legacy studies dismissed the value of HRT and indeed suggested that there could be harmful side effects, the risks have since been discredited. But please speak with a medical professional if you have any concerns.

HRT, me and you

Everyone is unique and although HRT is an effective way to treat menopausal symptoms, it may not be the right choice for you. There could be family genetics or medical reasons why you can't take it, or you might simply prefer to explore some of these other 'natural' options before seeking medical intervention.

DIY to help pause the symptoms

Small changes to your lifestyle can have a big impact on the how the menopause impacts your life.

A healthy approach to diet, exercise, relaxation and reducing alcohol intake and quitting smoking can improve menopausal symptoms in addition to improving heart and bone health.

The menopause transition can be a positive opportunity to review and make positive lifestyle changes and choices. It doesn't have to be a lifestyle limiting period in your life – in fact many women find it liberating!

Around one in six
(17%)
are considering leaving
their job due to lack
of support with their
menopause
symptoms





About
80%
of women experience
hot flushes during
menopause

Eat your way through menopause

- Aim for at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day.
- Introduce fibre-rich cereals, unsalted nuts, peas, pulses and beans.
- Aim for two to three portions of calcium-rich foods every day.
- Fill up on vitamin D foods including oily fish, mushrooms, fortified plant beverages, soya, oats and eggs to strengthen bones.
- Eat a diet that is low in saturated fat and salt to reduce blood pressure.
- Reduce caffeine and alcohol intake.

Keep fit to fight the symptoms

- Maintain a healthy body weight.
- Take regular exercise at least two days each week.
- Incorporate weights and muscle strengthening exercises into your regime.

- Yoga and meditation can help relieve joint pain, insomnia and anxiety.
- Do daily pelvic floor exercises.
- Stop smoking, which can increase the risk of an earlier menopause and trigger hot flushes.

Supplement your symptoms

- Taking collagen can help with joint pain and hair loss.
- Get advice from your doctor about taking nutritional supplements or vitamins.
- Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) can help with depression, anxiety and insomnia.
- For those who cannot or do not wish to take HRT, complementary or alternative therapies such as acupuncture, aromatherapy, herbal treatments, homeopathy and reflexology may sometimes help with troublesome menopausal symptoms.

Navigating the menopause at work

Experiencing menopausal symptoms while working can be challenging, but there are many ways to make the journey smoother and more comfortable. Here are some tips to take control of your symptoms while in the workplace, even on the tougher days.

Embrace flexibility

Take advantage of any flexibility. Whether it's adjusting your hours to match when you feel most energetic or taking short breaks when you need to recharge – small changes can make a big difference. Don't be afraid to have a conversation with your manager about how a different schedule might help you feel and perform better.

Dress for comfort

What you wear can significantly impact how you feel throughout the day. Choose breathable clothing that you can adjust as needed, especially if you're prone to hot flushes. If your workplace dress code is more formal, or you wear a uniform, consider talking to HR about allowances for more comfortable attire.

Create the right environment

Where you sit matters. If possible, choose a workspace with good air conditioning or use a fan. This will help you to stay cool and focused. Also, ask your employer if there is a dedicated rest area you can use if you need a break.

Connect with others

You're not alone. Reach out to others in your workplace who are also experiencing symptoms. Forming a support network can provide a sense of camaraderie and a shared understanding, making it easier to navigate challenges together.

Utilise employee benefits

Finally, don't forget to explore any employee benefits or support programmes that your workplace offers. Whether it's access to counselling, webinars or speaking to a virtual GP, these benefits are there to support your wellbeing. Make sure you're taking full advantage of what's available to help you thrive during the menopause.



Over
60%
of postmenopausal
women started looking
for information once
their symptoms had
already started

USEFUL RESOURCES

Menopause Matters – print and online magazine.

A quarterly magazine specifically written for those who are approaching or experiencing the menopause covering advice, resources and treatment options.

Newson Health - follow Dr Newson, the UK's leading menopause specialist on **Instagram @menopause_doctor**

Or visit **Newson Health** for podcasts, events, useful resources and advice.

Download the free **Balance app** to track your symptoms and access expert advice.

Rock my menopause for fact sheets, videos, guides and podcasts that make menopause mainstream.

My Menopause Centre will support you with evidence-based advice on menopause & symptoms, and recommend treatment options

tailored to you by an empathetic team of menopause specialists.

menopause: unmuted is a podcast series featuring women talking openly about their menopause, and its impact on relationships, friends, family, and work.

The Menopause Charity provides tools to manage the mental and physical changes of perimenopause and menopause.

Davina MCall TV programme



If you're interested in learning more about Menopause+,
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