

EMBRACING THE MENOPAUSAL JOURNEY

Menopause is a natural phase of life, but it doesn't have to be a challenging one.

Understanding your body, staying informed, and making simple lifestyle changes can help you navigate the transition with confidence.

From nutrition to exercise, sleep hygiene to stress management, **there are many ways you can empower yourself during this time.** Remember that each woman's journey is **unique**, and what works for one person may not work for another. Be **patient** with yourself, and don't hesitate to **seek support** when needed.

By adopting **healthy habits**, staying connected with supportive communities, and staying informed through trusted resources, you can embrace menopause as a time of transformation, not just change. Whether you choose to explore HRT or focus on lifestyle solutions, you have options that are right for you.

The path to a vibrant, balanced life during menopause is paved with self-care, education, and support. Take charge of your health, and remember: you're not alone in this journey.

Use the symptom tracker provided in your doctor consultation and have a read around HRT options you would like to consider for your upcoming appointment. We want to support you fully during this time and hope this booklet serves in part to do that.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Here are some evidence-based resources to support your learning about menopause:

1. National Osteoporosis Society (NOS) – Provides comprehensive information on the impact of menopause on bone health and offers guidelines for prevention and management of osteoporosis during and after menopause.
 - Website: www.nos.org.uk
2. Menopause Matters – A UK-based resource offering expert advice on managing menopause symptoms, including treatment options, lifestyle changes, and HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy). They also provide regular updates on new research.
 - Website: www.menopausematters.co.uk
3. British Menopause Society (BMS) – A professional organization that provides evidence-based information and guidelines on menopause and related health issues. They focus on the clinical management of menopause and offer resources for both healthcare providers and the public.
 - Website: www.britishmenopausesociety.org
4. The Sleep Foundation – Offers advice on how menopause can affect sleep, including common sleep disturbances like night sweats and insomnia, and how to manage them effectively.
 - Website: www.sleepfoundation.org
5. American College of Lifestyle Medicine (ACLM) – Provides resources on how lifestyle medicine, including nutrition, exercise, and stress management, can support menopause health and overall well-being.
 - Website: www.lifestylemedicine.org
6. Food as Medicine – Focuses on the role of nutrition in managing menopausal symptoms. It highlights the importance of phytoestrogens, whole foods, and the impact of diet on hormonal balance.
 - Website: www.foodasmedicine.com

These organizations provide reliable, evidence-based information and guidance to help you understand and manage menopause effectively.

Choosing the Right Form of HRT

Your doctor will help support you to decide which form of HRT is best for you based on your symptoms, medical history, and preferences. The goal is to find a treatment that works well for you while minimising side effects.

Benefits of HRT

- **Relieves menopausal symptoms:** HRT can help significantly reduce hot flashes, night sweats, vaginal dryness, and mood swings.
- **Protects bone health:** oestrogen helps prevent bone thinning, reducing the risk of osteoporosis.
- **Improves quality of life:** Many women find that HRT improves their mood, energy levels, and overall well-being.

Considerations and Risks

- **HRT is not suitable for everyone**, especially those with certain health conditions like breast cancer, blood clots, or liver disease.
- It's important to **regularly review your treatment** 3 monthly initially then annually to ensure that the benefits continue to outweigh any risks.

HRT can be an effective treatment to manage menopause symptoms and improve quality of life. Understanding how it works and the different forms available can help you make an informed decision with your healthcare provider.

HRT is available in several different forms, allowing you to choose the one that best suits your needs:

1. Tablets

- Taken orally, usually once a day.
- Easy to use but can have more side effects, such as nausea or headaches.

2. Patches

- Patches are applied to the skin, releasing a steady dose of hormones.
- Can be less likely to cause stomach-related side effects and are safer as the hormones are absorbed through the skin rather than entering digestive tract.

3. Gels and Creams

- Applied directly to the skin (usually on the arms or legs) and absorbed into the bloodstream.
- Flexible in dosing and can be adjusted easily.

5. Intrauterine System (IUS)

- A small device inserted into the uterus, releasing progesterone.
- Helps manage both menopause symptoms and provides birth control.
- Commonly used when there is a need for progesterone to protect the uterus.

6. Vaginal Treatments

- Available as creams, rings, or pessaries.
- Directly treat vaginal dryness and discomfort, without affecting the whole body.

HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY

What is HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy)?

Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) is a treatment used to relieve symptoms of menopause by replenishing the hormones that the body no longer produces in sufficient amounts. As women enter menopause, the levels of oestrogen and progesterone decrease, which can lead to symptoms like hot flushes, night sweats, mood changes, and vaginal dryness. HRT aims to restore hormonal balance to alleviate these symptoms and improve quality of life.

How Does HRT Work?

HRT works by replacing the hormones that are naturally declining during menopause, particularly oestrogen and, in some cases, progesterone. Oestrogen helps to reduce menopause symptoms such as hot flushes, night sweats, and vaginal dryness.

Progesterone is added if you still have a uterus to prevent the risk of endometrial cancer, which can be increased by oestrogen alone.

Does HRT work for everyone?

The Fawcett Society's 2022 report highlights that **46% of people experiencing menopausal symptoms did not see improvements because of inadequate lifestyle changes.** This underscores the importance of supporting healthy lifestyle through menopause with proper information and adjustments to diet, exercise, and stress management. Implementing changes in these areas is key to alleviating symptoms and improving overall well-being during this transitional phase.

TOXIN TIPS

Over the past 60 years, 87,000+ new chemicals have entered our environment, affecting food, water, beauty products, and clothing. These **toxins accumulate in our bodies** and can be released during menopause due to hormonal shifts, worsening symptoms.

Here's how to reduce toxin exposure and support detoxification:

1. Switch to Natural Products

Opt for **chemical-free, natural alternatives** in cleaning and beauty products to avoid hormone disruptors like parabens and phthalates.

2. Avoid BPA Plastics

BPA in plastics mimics oestrogen and disrupts hormones. Choose **BPA-free products** and store food in glass or stainless steel containers.

3. Choose Organic Foods

Organic foods reduce pesticide exposure, supporting hormone balance. **Prioritise organic produce, dairy, and meats.**

4. Incorporate Detoxifying Foods

Eat leafy greens, cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cabbage), and stay hydrated to **support liver detox** and flush out toxins.

Additional Tips:

- **Exercise regularly** to help release toxins.
- **Manage stress** with yoga or meditation to prevent adrenal overload.

These lifestyle changes help your body manage toxins and support hormonal balance during menopause.

STRESS LESS

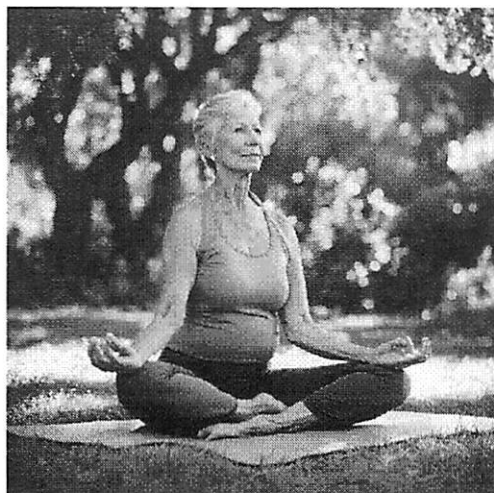
During menopause, the adrenal glands take over oestrogen production as the ovaries slow down. These small glands which sit on top of your kidneys also produce cortisol, the body's stress hormone.

Chronic stress can overload the adrenals, worsening symptoms like fatigue and mood swings.

Stress less Tips:

- Practice positive affirmations, **mindfulness**, yoga, EFT or meditation to reduce stress.
- Spend **time in nature** to recharge.
- Engage in hobbies or **activities you enjoy**.
- Use **breathing techniques** to relax.

Prioritising self-care during menopause is ESSENTIAL. You really must say no to more so that you can prioritise more of the things that will support you and your health. As from this place you're better for yourself and others. Over committing and deprioritising our needs can only be done for so long and lead to poor personal health outcomes.



SLEEP SOUND

Poor sleep is common (around 40%) during menopause due to hormonal changes, but good sleep is essential for managing symptoms and overall health.

Sleep Tips:

- Establish a **bedtime routine** to wind down an hour before sleep.
- **Do not use screens** for 1-2 hours before bed as this interferes with one of your sleep hormones; melatonin production.
- Keep your bedroom cool, dark, and quiet for a restful environment. **Our bodies need to cool down to sleep.**
- Shower or bath before bed to support the body's cooling process.
- **Limit caffeine and alcohol intake.** Caffeine has a half life of 5-7 hours so anything after noon is still significantly in your system at bedtime and affecting the sleepy hormones. Alcohol reduces the amount of time spent in REM sleep. This phase is critical for cognitive functions such as memory consolidation, problem-solving, and emotional regulation.
- **Use relaxation techniques** like meditation, deep breathing, or gentle yoga to help the mind wind down.

If you wake up frequently, try to avoid bright lights and screens. Go somewhere quiet and cosy within your home to read, knit, colour or listen to relaxing music then go back to bed when you feel tired enough. This will help reestablish the connection your brain makes with bed and sleep.

MAXIMISE MOVEMENT

Regular exercise is essential during menopause to maintain health and reduce symptoms.

Exercise Benefits:

- Increases energy levels
- Reduces stress
- Improves sleep quality
- Strengthens bones and muscles
- Lowers the risk of chronic conditions (heart disease, diabetes)

Aim for balance not over doing or under doing it. 30 minutes is the goal but start slow and build up, consistency is key for new habits and behaviours so if you're at zero start with 5 minutes daily.

Try to **incorporate a mix of cardio, strength training, weights, and flexibility exercises** and try to choose things you enjoy as you're much more likely to stick with it. Remember as you become more able your motivation will grow so keep showing up for yourself!

Weight training helps preserve bone density, reducing the risk of osteoporosis as oestrogen levels decline.

Aerobic exercise like walking, swimming, or cycling aids in weight management, boosts energy, and improves mood.

Yoga and Pilates improve flexibility and reduce tension.

Weight Management: As metabolism changes during menopause, many women struggle with weight gain. Fasting may help regulate appetite and improve metabolism, potentially making it easier to maintain a healthy weight during menopause.

Improved Sleep: Fasting can help improve sleep quality by stabilizing blood sugar levels and reducing the likelihood of nighttime blood sugar crashes that can disrupt sleep. Better sleep can reduce mood swings, fatigue, and other symptoms of menopause.

While intermittent fasting can offer benefits, it's important to approach it carefully. Consulting with a healthcare provider is always a good idea to ensure that fasting is appropriate for your individual health needs and lifestyle.

Pay attention to triggers for symptoms and have an awareness that foods and drinks high in caffeine, alcohol, or that are spicy may worsen hot flashes or disrupt sleep.

Fasting, particularly intermittent fasting, may help with menopause symptoms for several reasons:

Hormonal Balance: Fasting can help regulate insulin and cortisol levels, both of which play a role in hormone regulation.

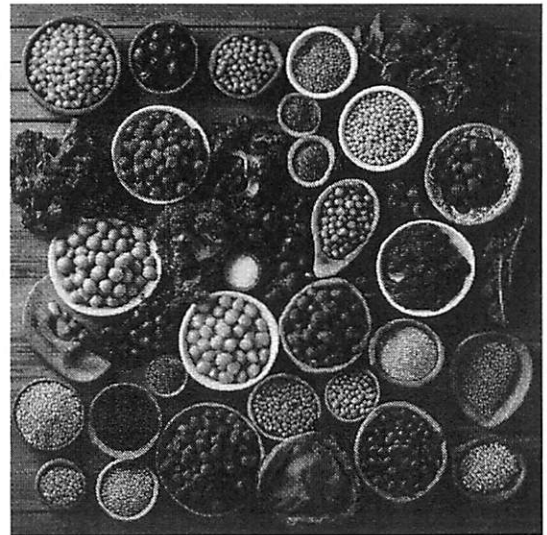
Improved Insulin Sensitivity: During menopause, some women may experience insulin resistance, which can lead to weight gain and higher blood sugar levels. Intermittent fasting can help improve insulin sensitivity, which may support weight management and reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes.

Reduced Inflammation: Menopause can increase inflammation in the body, which contributes to symptoms like joint pain, fatigue, and mood swings. Fasting has been shown to reduce markers of inflammation, potentially alleviating some of these symptoms.

Cellular Repair: Fasting triggers autophagy, a process where the body removes damaged cells and regenerates new ones. This may promote overall health, improve energy levels, and help with skin elasticity—areas that can be affected during menopause.

Top 10 Foods Rich in Phytoestrogens:

1. Soy products (tofu, tempeh)
2. Flaxseeds
3. Chickpeas
4. Lentils
5. Sesame seeds
6. Alfalfa sprouts
7. Cabbage
8. Carrots
9. Berries
10. Whole grains (oats, barley)



Fun Fact:

In Japan, where soy is a staple in the diet, menopause symptoms are less common, and the language doesn't even have a word for hot flashes.

Intermittent Fasting:

Try incorporating micro fasting (12-13 hours without food) by delaying breakfast by just an hour. You're already fasting for 6-8 hours while sleeping!

NOURISHING NUTRITION

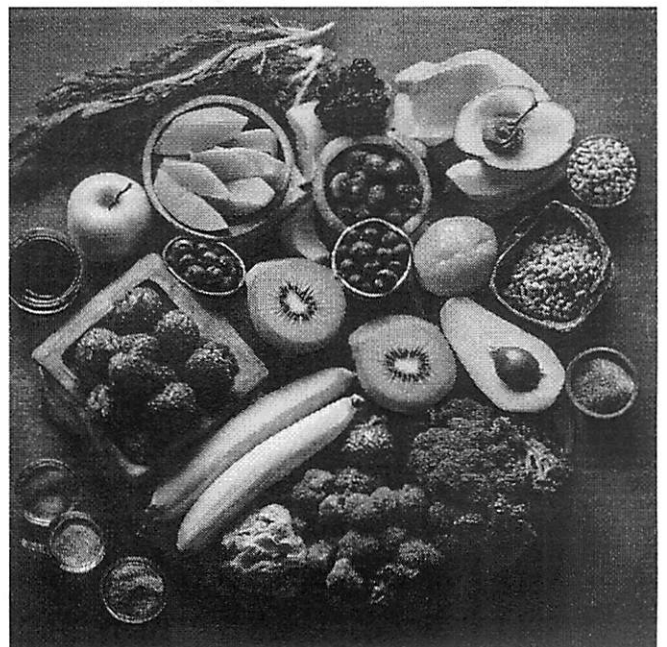
Firstly remember as humans 60% of our body is water, we **NEED WATER** for many bodily symptoms, for good concentration and digestion so make sure you're getting 35ml per kg this is usually 2-3L or 8 glasses per day for an average adult.

To support good general health and hormonal balance, focus on **whole foods**—fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats. (Reminder whole foods trump supplements)

Phytoestrogens in foods like soy, flaxseeds, and legumes mimic oestrogen and help ease hormonal fluctuations.

Healthy fats from nuts, avocado, linseed, and olive oil provide omega-3s that support appetite regulation, blood sugar, and cholesterol.

Fermented foods like kefir, kimchi, and kombucha support gut health and hormone activation.



HOW CAN I ADAPT MY LIFESTYLE TO SUPPORT MENOPAUSE?

Lifestyle changes can play a powerful role in managing menopause symptoms. Research shows that a combination of nutrition, exercise, stress management and good sleep habits can significantly ease symptoms such as hot flashes, night sweats, and mood swings.

Why adopt lifestyle modifications?

The great news is that these changes come with **no harmful side effects**, unlike some medications. By focusing on healthy habits, you can support your overall well-being while addressing menopause symptoms naturally.

Key Lifestyle Strategies:

1. **Nourishing nutrition:** Opt for a balanced diet rich in phytoestrogens, vitamins, and minerals to nourish your body, stay well hydrated and consider fasting.
2. **Maximise movement:** Combine strength training, cardio, and flexibility exercises to maintain bone density, boost mood, and support energy levels.
3. **Sleep sound:** Sleep is the ultimate panacea for good health and hormone balance.
4. **Stress less:** Use techniques like meditation, yoga, or spending time in nature to keep cortisol levels in check.
5. **Toxin tips:** Decreasing toxin load and choosing more natural and organic products is key at this time.

MENOPAUSE SYMPTOMS

Lets check in with your symptoms.

In the present column, note if you experience the symptom. Use the comments section to add any details on frequency, severity, or other observations.

this tracker can help you monitor changes over time and support discussions with your healthcare provider.

Symptom	Present	Comments
Hot Flashes		
Night Sweats		
Poor Sleep		
Tiredness		
Low Energy		
Weight Gain		
Difficulty Concentrating		
Low Mood		
Anxiety		
Irritability		
Feeling Overwhelmed		
Loss of Confidence		
Dry Skin		
Itchy Skin		
Headaches		
Palpitations		
Vaginal Dryness		
Vaginal Discharge		
Pain During Intercourse		
Loss of Sex Drive		
Frequent Urinary Tract Infections		
Urge Incontinence		
Muscle and Joint Pains		



OTHER _____

Progesterone

Progesterone is another hormone that helps regulate your period and balance oestrogen.

- What happens: progesterone levels also drop during menopause, especially once your periods stop completely.
- How it feels: low progesterone can add to sleep problems and sometimes cause more intense mood changes, such as irritability or sadness.

Testosterone

Though often thought of as a male hormone, women also have testosterone, which helps with energy, mood, and libido (sex drive).

- What happens: testosterone levels decrease with age and during menopause.
- How it feels: low testosterone can reduce sex drive and sometimes cause fatigue or feelings of low energy.

These hormone changes are a normal part of aging but can impact your daily life. There are options to manage symptoms if they're bothersome, including lifestyle changes, supplements, or even hormone therapy if appropriate.

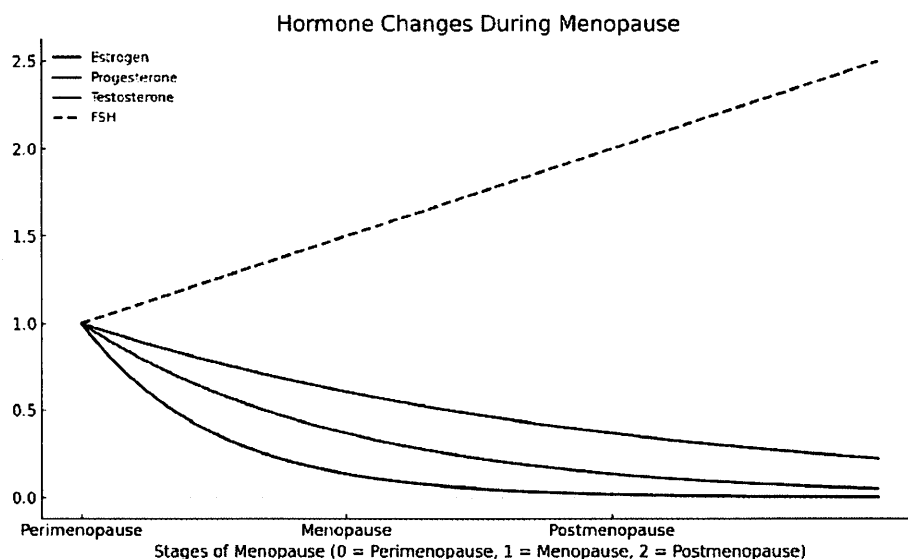
WHAT'S HAPPENING MY HORMONES AT THIS TIME?

During menopause, the hormones oestrogen, progesterone, and testosterone change in ways that can cause a range of symptoms. Here's a simple breakdown of what happens:

Oestrogen

Oestrogen is a hormone that plays a big role in controlling your menstrual cycle and affects your mood, bones, skin, and heart health.

- What happens: During menopause, oestrogen levels drop gradually and become low, which causes many common symptoms, like hot flashes, night sweats, and vaginal dryness. During perimenopause levels of oestrogen are fluctuating which causes the unpredictability in symptoms experienced.
- How it feels: Low oestrogen can also cause mood swings, trouble sleeping, and sometimes even joint aches.



COMMON TERMS

Here's a quick breakdown of common terms used in discussing menopause:

Menopause

This term specifically refers to the point in time when a woman has gone 12 consecutive months without a menstrual period, marking the end of reproductive years. The average age is around 51 but can vary.

Perimenopause

Often called the "menopausal transition," perimenopause is the phase leading up to menopause, which can last several years. During this period, hormone levels fluctuate, causing symptoms like irregular periods, hot flashes, mood changes, and sleep issues.

Postmenopause

This is the stage that follows menopause, starting one year after the final menstrual period. Symptoms like hot flashes may continue, but hormone levels have settled into a lower baseline.

INTRODUCTION

Hello and welcome!

This booklet is designed to be a valuable resource as you navigate the journey of menopause.

Our goal is to empower you with the knowledge and understanding needed to support your health and wellbeing during this significant phase of life.

Inside, you'll find information on common symptoms, lifestyle adjustments, and options for managing the changes that menopause may bring.

Remember, while this guide is a helpful tool, it is not a substitute for personalised medical advice.

If you have specific concerns or questions, please reach out to your healthcare provider. Your health and peace of mind are important, and professional guidance is always the best course of action.

MENOPAUSE MATTERS

**A GUIDE FOR WOMAN ON SYMPTOMS,
HORMONE CHANGES, LIFESTYLE ADAPTATIONS
TO CONSIDER AND INFORMATION ON HRT**

