

# Menopause toolkit

The menopause is a natural stage of life which affects around half of the population.

This can include women, non-binary, transgender and intersex people, and affect relatives, colleagues and carers who are supporting someone going through it.



This toolkit will explain the signs and symptoms of menopause and offer some useful advice, as well as highlighting local and national support available to help you.



# What causes the menopause?

The menopause is caused by a change in the balance of the body's sex hormones, which occurs as you get older. It usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, as a woman's oestrogen levels decline.

In the UK, the average age for a woman to reach the menopause is 51.

Premature or early menopause can occur at any age, and in many cases there's no clear cause.

Sometimes it's caused by a treatment such as surgery to remove the ovaries, some breast cancer treatments, chemotherapy or radiotherapy, or it can be brought on by an underlying condition, such as Down's syndrome or Addison's disease.



# Menopause symptoms - what you need to know

Most women will experience some symptoms around the menopause. The duration and severity of these symptoms varies from woman to woman.

Symptoms usually start a few months or years before your periods stop, known as the perimenopause, and can persist for some time afterwards.



# Common menopause symptoms

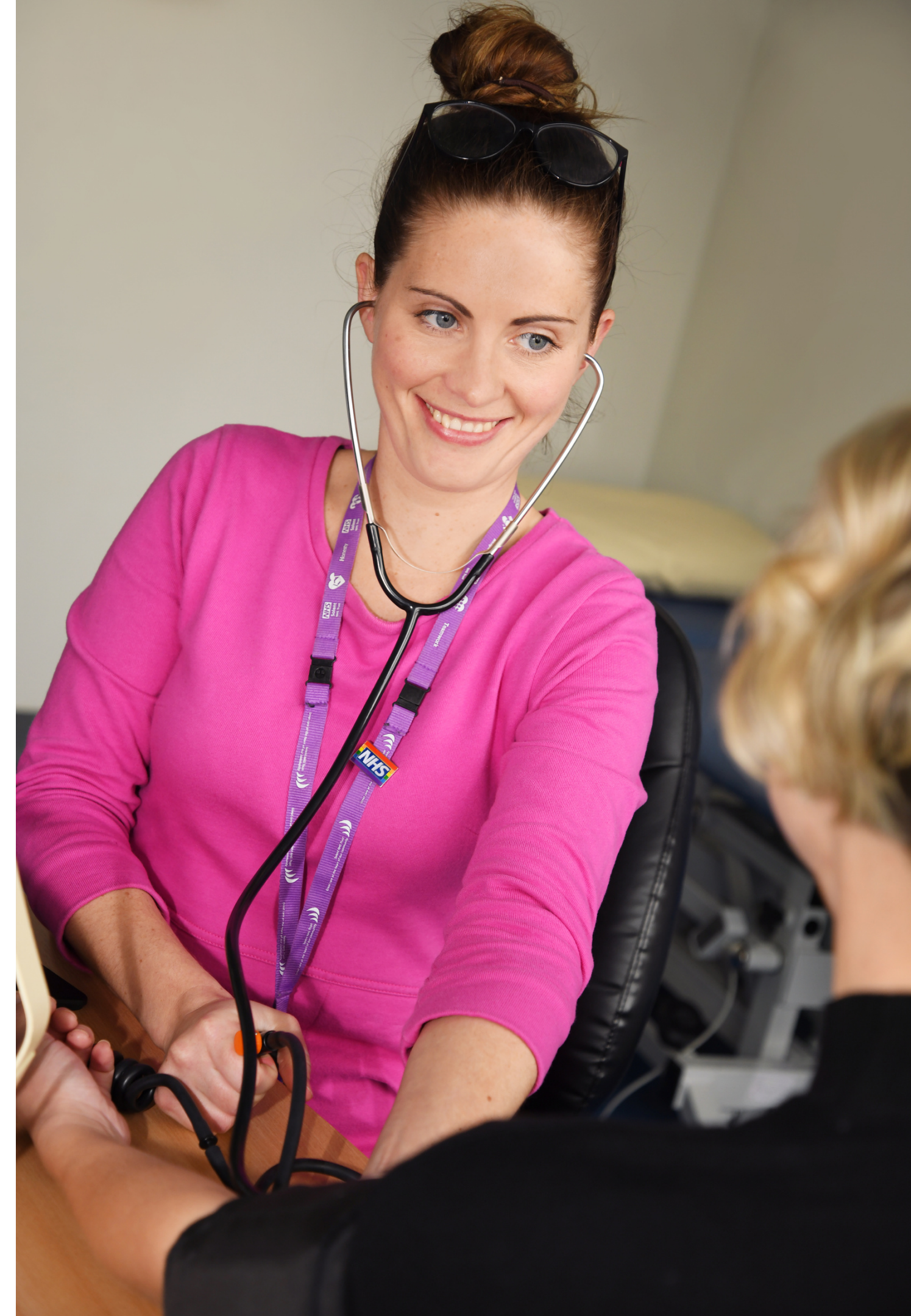
- Changes to your periods
- Hot flushes
- Night sweats
- Changes to your skin
- Difficulty sleeping
- Reduced sex drive
- Vaginal dryness
- Problems with memory and concentration
- Changes to your periods
- Palpitations
- Joint stiffness, aches and pains
- Reduced muscle mass
- Recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs)
- Thinning hair
- Headaches



# When to see your GP

It's worth talking to a GP if you have menopausal symptoms that are troubling you or if you're experiencing symptoms of the menopause before 45 years of age.

They can usually confirm whether you're menopausal based on your symptoms, but a blood test to measure your hormone levels may be carried out if you're under 45.



# How to manage symptoms

## Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)

HRT replaces the hormones that are missing. Most symptoms are caused by low oestrogen levels, so this is the most important hormone to replace.

If you have a womb you also need a progestogen to protect the lining of the womb. HRT is extremely effective at relieving menopausal symptoms.

HRT is available as tablets, skin patches or a gel to rub into the skin. Find out more about HRT: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/hormone-replacement-therapy-hrt/](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hormone-replacement-therapy-hrt/)

## Healthy lifestyle

Eating a healthy, balanced diet and exercising regularly to maintain a healthy weight can improve some menopausal symptoms.

[www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well)



## Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

CBT is a type of talking therapy that can help with low mood and anxiety. Find out more: [www.nhs.uk/mental-health/talking-therapies-medicine-treatments/talking-therapies-and-counselling/cognitive-behavioural-therapy-cbt/overview/](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/talking-therapies-medicine-treatments/talking-therapies-and-counselling/cognitive-behavioural-therapy-cbt/overview/)

# 12 ways to ease symptoms of the **menopause**



Keep your bedroom cool at night, if you suffer with night sweats and wear light clothing.

Try to reduce your stress levels through breathing techniques or mindful exercises.

Talk to friends, family and colleagues about how you are feeling or seek online support with other women,

If you suffer from hot flushes, avoid potential triggers (spicy food, caffeine, smoking and alcohol.)



Take regular exercise to help with low mood or mood swings.

Try out relaxing activities such as yoga or tai chi to help with low mood.

Ensure you get some sunlight – this triggers the production of vitamin D, which can help to keep your bones strong.

Having trouble sleeping? Try the 4-7-8 method. Breathe in for a count of four, hold for a count of seven, then blow out of your mouth for a count of eight. Focusing and counting can help reduce some of the things keeping you awake.



Eat a healthy diet that includes plenty of fruit, vegetables and sources of calcium.

Be kind to yourself: spending a few minutes morning and evening saying affirmations can be very powerful.

Protect your skin by wearing sunscreen and consider switching to unfragranced skincare products, which are suitable for sensitive skin.

Drink lots of water and eat oily fish to help improve your brain function. [www.henpicked.net/menopause-hub/eight-ways-to-beat-menopausal-brain-fog](http://www.henpicked.net/menopause-hub/eight-ways-to-beat-menopausal-brain-fog)

# "I can honestly say I've had days where I've felt more exhausted than when I gave birth!"

Fiona, 47, Media and Communications Manager at Solent NHS Trust, shares her experience of menopause:

"In some ways I was fortunate because I went in to the menopause overnight, following a full hysterectomy. Post-surgery, I returned to a really supportive workplace but I did struggle with extreme fatigue and hot flushes, which became difficult to manage when others wanted to switch the air conditioning off! Even though I knew logically that the surgery had actually helped my health, there was a part of me that felt I must have somehow aged overnight.

I noticed my skin felt dry, I rapidly gained weight. I can honestly say I've had days where I've felt more exhausted than when I gave birth. Luckily, I've only experienced a few of the acknowledged 72 symptoms of menopause!"





# Fiona's top practical tips for menopause



- 1** Tell your manager you are experiencing symptoms, so your work environment may be adapted where possible.
- 2** If possible, only wear natural materials, to reduce irritation and sweat.
- 3** Cut out caffeine completely and reduce alcohol intake to reduce hot flushes.
- 4** Invest in a 'cool' pillow to help you sleep.
- 5** If you have symptoms and are concerned about the menopause, please speak to your GP and, if you want, ask for HRT – it's a game changer and it significantly helps reduce heart risk and osteoporosis.
- 6** There are some fantastically knowledgeable people on social media. I personally follow @LaurenChiren, menopause coach and founder of Women of a Certain Age.



# Support in the workplace

For managers, the menopause is a health and wellbeing concern for staff and needs to be handled sensitively.

## If you are a leader or manager

- Carry out a risk assessment on the work environment, looking at uniform, ventilation and toilet facilities.
- Make sure your staff are aware of the support available to them - such as the new Menopause Support service from the HIOW Health & Wellbeing team.
- Individual conversations with staff should always be confidential and held in private.
- It might not always be obvious who is experiencing menopause symptoms. It's important to remember that a large number of people can experience symptoms, including trans people, intersex people and those who identify as non-binary.

For further information:

[HIOW Manager's Menopause Guidance](#)

[www.acas.org.uk/menopause-at-work/supporting-staff-through-the-menopause](http://www.acas.org.uk/menopause-at-work/supporting-staff-through-the-menopause)

[www.nhsemployers.org/articles/menopause-and-workplace](http://www.nhsemployers.org/articles/menopause-and-workplace)



# Support for you in the workplace

[www.menopausematters.co.uk/menopause\\_at\\_work.php](http://www.menopausematters.co.uk/menopause_at_work.php)

- Find out more about menopause in general
- Talk with a manager / HR department you feel comfortable with
- Use technology where it can help you – setting up reminders on your phone or taking more notes

- If you have supportive work colleagues talk about your experiences with them, you may find you're not alone.
- Humour can help deflect embarrassment and increase your confidence
- Look into mindfulness techniques you can practice at work and home

# The male menopause

Some men develop depression, loss of sex drive, erectile dysfunction, and other physical and emotional symptoms when they reach their late 40s to early 50s.

Other symptoms common in men this age are:

- mood swings and irritability
- loss of muscle mass and reduced ability to exercise
- fat redistribution, such as developing a large belly or "man boobs"
- a general lack of enthusiasm or energy
- difficulty sleeping (insomnia) or increased tiredness
- poor concentration and short-term memory

These symptoms can interfere with everyday life and happiness, so it's important to find the underlying cause and work out what can be done to resolve it.

Find out more: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/male-menopause](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/male-menopause)



# Local menopause support

A new Menopause Support service is now available to help support NHS and Primary Care colleagues in Hampshire and Isle of Wight.

The service offers:

- **HIOW Menopause 121 Service** - offer one to one appointments with Menopause Advisors self-refer online using the QR code below or via the People Portal
- The service has oversight from Dr Caroline Taylor, Menopause Specialist Clinician
- Explore the **MenoHealth online menopause awareness sessions**, available via the People Portal to complete at your own pace
- **Menopause Meet Ups** run on alternate Thursdays - everyone is welcome whether you are going through menopause, supporting someone who is or just want to know more. Sign up on Eventbrite [here](#)
- **Online fitness classes** are running three times a week specifically for those going through peri-menopause or menopause - focusing on improving bone strength and increasing fat burning potential.

Visit the **People Portal** for more details: [www.hiowpeople.nhs.uk](http://www.hiowpeople.nhs.uk)



HIOW Menopause 121  
Consultation Self Referral Form





Information for this toolkit was taken from:

[nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk)

[nhsemployers.org](https://www.nhsemployers.org)

[acas.org.uk](https://www.acas.org.uk)

[henpicked.net](https://www.henpicked.net)

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

[www.hiowpeople.nhs.uk](https://www.hiowpeople.nhs.uk)

