



Menopause symptoms and practical tips to manage them

| Symptom: | Description of symptoms: | What you can do to help manage the symptoms: |
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| Hot flushes | Both hot flushes and night sweats are the same – with the only difference being that night sweats are hot flushes that happen at night. | Different factors may increase hot flushes/night sweats in different people. Make a note of triggers and avoid them. According to the National Institute of Ageing, common triggers can include alcohol, spicy food, caffeine, and smoking. |
| Night sweats | They are caused by declining oestrogen levels and this impacts your brain's ability to regulate body temperature. Your body thinks it is overheating when it isn't, and your brain triggers the body to cool down by sweating and increasing blood flow through the skin's blood vessels which causes the flush. | Stay cool. Wear light clothes or dress in layers so you can remove them when a hot flash strikes. Wear cotton rather than man-made fibres. |
| Body Odour | | Keep a fan beside the bed. This will help when people experience night sweats. |
| Chills | Both are one of the most common menopausal symptoms and can vary in severity and duration. They can occur in about 3 in 4 women and for about 20% of women they can be quite severe and cause a lot of distress - impacting work, sleep, and overall quality of life. However, for most women going through the menopause they may only occur occasionally. | Keep the room temperature low. Open windows and use a fan or air conditioner to keep air circulating in the room. |
| | Experiencing hot flushes and night sweats can also increase body odour. Furthermore, symptoms such as anxiety cause sweat produced in the apocrine glands. Anxiety sweat is fatty and breeds and feeds on bacteria which creates a more pungent smell. | Take a cool shower during the day and before bed. |
| | Hot flushes are often described as sudden and unexpected feeling of heat on the face, neck, and chest and can spread all over the body. Some women become giddy, weak, or feel sick during a hot flush. Some women also develop a 'thumping heart' sensation (palpitations) and feelings of anxiety during the episode. | Run cool water over the wrists. There are many blood vessels in the wrists, so this may be a good way to cool off quickly. |
| | | Keep a healthy weight. Hot flashes can be more frequent and severe if people are overweight or obese. Keep a healthy weight by doing regular exercise and having an active lifestyle. 30 minutes of moderate intensity exercise a day can help reduce hot flush severity and is also a good way to combat other symptoms of menopause (including raising mood). |
| | | Relax and reduce stress. Slow and deep breathing and meditation are techniques that can help relieve stress and reduce hot flashes. |
| | | Sip cold drinks. |
| | | Excess caffeine can worsen palpitations so drink coffee, tea, and caffeinated soft drinks in moderation. |



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| | <p>The number of hot flushes can vary from every now and then, to fifteen or more a day. They usually last between three and five minutes. They can last for many years and about 50% of women experience symptoms of hot flushes for around seven years. Many continue to experience them in their 60s and some even longer – so there is a huge variation.</p> <p>It is thought that a three-minute-long hot flush is the equivalent to the level of sweating and relaxation of blood vessels caused by a 30 minute moderate intensity bicycle ride.</p> <p>Not only are hot flushes uncomfortable but they can also lead to a feeling of embarrassment particularly due to the changes to the appearance of the skin like redness and sweatiness.</p> <p>Usually there is a daily pattern of rises and falls in your body temperature – the lowest is at about 3am and the highest is in the early evening. These small changes are not normally noticed but a menopausal woman may flush with every temperature rise, whether these are normal changes or not – for example, moving between areas of different temperature or having a hot drink.</p> <p>Hot flushes can also be associated with headaches and palpitations – with approximately 85% of women being affected in some way by these early onset symptoms.</p> <p>While hot flashes are practically synonymous with perimenopause, some women experience the other extreme: a bone-deep cold that no matter how many blankets you layer on, you just can't warm up. Or you may be in a warm room and suddenly feel chilled and begin shivering. Sometimes cold flashes come on the heels of a</p> | <p>Avoid hot showers or baths in favour of a lukewarm shower or bath.</p> <p>Try having sheets on your bed rather than a duvet or try a lighter weight duvet.</p> <p>Cold gel packs or spritzing your face with cool water may also help with hot flushes.</p> <p>HRT and natural supplements may help manage menopause symptoms. Plants or plant extracts such as St John's Wort, Black Cohosh, and Isoflavones (soya products) can help reduce hot flushes and night sweats for some women. However, their safety is unknown and they can react with other medicines that you may be taking for conditions such as breast cancer, epilepsy, heart disease or asthma. Check with your GP before taking any herbal medicine. If you buy herbal products, look for a product licence or Traditional Herbal Registration (THR) number on the label (see image) to ensure that what you are buying has been checked for purity. It is advisable to buy remedies from a reputable source.</p> <p>Get active when you're in the throes of a cold flash – get up and start moving. This will increase blood flow to help you warm up.</p> <p>Slip on socks if cold flashes occur during the night – keeping your feet warm may help.</p> <p>If you are having disruptive cold flashes, a trip to the GP is recommended. Poor circulation, thyroid dysfunction, anaemia, and low blood sugar can cause cold flashes and can be more serious than a typical hormonal imbalance due to perimenopause.</p> |



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| | <p>hot flash when damp, sweaty clothes only make them worse. Other times, they come alone and mysteriously. Cold flashes usually pass within a few minutes but they can last for up to 20 minutes and are more common at night.</p> <p>As oestrogen levels drop, the hypothalamus – the part of the brain responsible for regulating your body temperature – gets overly sensitive and therefore temperature regulation can be unstable.</p> | |
| Irregular periods | <p>You may find that periods last longer or may only last a couple of days. They may be heavier or lighter than normal, are more frequent – every 2 weeks or less frequent.</p> <p>Some months you may not notice any changes and other months you may notice that your periods are different.</p> | <p>If you notice that your menstrual symptoms are becoming more uncomfortable, or irregular, or there is a change in nature during perimenopause, try:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keeping a diary to track any changes to your menstrual cycle as this is a clear indication that you may be entering perimenopause. • taking over-the-counter pain relievers or specific medicines for period symptoms. • exercising to reduce bloating and help with cramps. • practicing meditation to help relieve stress, pain, or mood swings. • applying heat to the back or stomach to help with cramps and muscle pain. • people who experience irregular or painful periods might find relief from using hormonal birth control. |
| Mood changes Low mood | <p>Research indicates that 61% of perimenopausal women experience low mood.</p> <p>Sleep problems caused by perimenopausal symptoms such as night sweats, lead to sleep deprivation which in turn can cause anxiety and/or depression.</p> <p>In addition to poor sleep quality, anxiety, and depression along with low mood are associated with low levels of</p> | <p>Help is available through counselling, medication, or a combination of treatments.</p> <p>If menopause mood swings or emotional upheavals are interfering with a person's enjoyment of life, they should see a mental health counsellor, or their GP.</p> |



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| | <p>serotonin. Oestrogen influences the production and breakdown of serotonin, so lower levels of oestrogen will impact serotonin levels in women going through the menopause. The majority of serotonin is produced by the gut and is used by the brain to influence mood helping to relieve depression and anxiety.</p> <p>Serotonin also plays a role in the production of melatonin which supports the circadian rhythm which regulates sleep patterns. A lack of serotonin will impact the production of melatonin within the body contributing to poor and low quality sleep.</p> <p>Poor sleep can also have an impact on your levels of the stress hormone cortisol (which prepares our 'fight or flight' response). Whilst cortisol levels rise and fall throughout the day, with levels being higher first thing in the morning, lack of sleep can cause your cortisol levels to rise and stay high which can impact mood, including feelings of anxiety and depression.</p> <p>Feelings of tension, nervousness, difficulty in coping, and irritability are common as are mood changes – which can vary hugely in severity, type of problem and impact on the individual.</p> <p>Lifestyle factors such as children leaving home, ageing parents, and work pressures can also contribute to stress, anxiety and low mood and commonly occur around the time of menopause.</p> | <p>Experts have found that exercise, diet, getting enough sleep, and pursuing supportive friendships can all help women with the emotional aspects of the transition into menopause.</p> <p>Regular exercise is a great way to promote both mental and physical health. Being active helps relieve stress, improves mood, and makes it easier to put problems in perspective. Activities such as walking, swimming and yoga will all help improve mood as well as support physical health. 2.5 hours a week of moderately intense aerobic exercise, such as a fast walk, plus 2 days a week of muscle strengthening is also recommended.</p> <p>Diet as well as exercise also plays a key role in supporting mental health. Avoiding excessive alcohol consumption, sugar, and a diet high in fat will help support your gut's ecosystem and will have a positive impact on your mood.</p> <p>NICE recommends that HRT is offered for treatment where mood changes are due to declining oestrogen levels.</p> <p>Other therapies such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) can also be recommended along with meditation and mindfulness to help accept the feelings of low mood and anxiety and learn to live in the present moment. Apps such as CALM and Headspace offer guided meditations to help relieve anxiety, stress, and insomnia.</p> <p>Low mood as a result of the menopause is different from depression. Antidepressants are not helpful unless you have been diagnosed with depression. If you are on antidepressants, it is safe to take HRT as well as use CBT.</p> <p>Talking to other women going through the perimenopause and sharing your experience will also help improve your mental health.</p> |



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| Memory issues Difficulties concentrating Brain fog | <p>Memory loss or lapses, trouble concentrating and the feeling of 'brain fog' can be worrying but natural symptoms of the perimenopause and menopause.</p> <p>Fuzzy thinking, or 'brain fog', is one of the most frustrating symptoms women face during their menopausal years. Menopausal brain fog is best described as a 'cotton wool' feeling: you may find it hard to absorb and recall information or concentrate on simple tasks. Common complaints may include forgetting what you walked into a room to do or struggling to remember names of people.</p> <p>Some women may worry about developing dementia or Alzheimer's after experiencing brain fog. However, evidence suggests that learning ability and memory returns during postmenopause.</p> <p>It is a symptom that many women do not associate with the early stages of menopause – instead putting it down to being too busy or stressed with work or life in general.</p> <p>As well as a drop in oestrogen and testosterone levels (both having an important role to play on cognition and memory) resulting in a lack of focus and concentration, other secondary symptoms associated with the menopause can cause memory and concentration issues. For example, sleep deprivation due to poor sleep caused by night sweats and other symptoms, anxiety and increased stress levels due to a lack of sleep can all impact cognitive function and be the cause of memory issues, trouble concentrating and 'brain fog'.</p> | <p>Eat well. Adopt a good healthy diet. The Mediterranean diet has been widely touted for its brain-protective properties due to its inclusion of omega-3s and unsaturated fats and offers great support in perimenopause and menopause to maintain optimal brain function. Omega 3 Fatty Acids are considered the elite brain food. Omega 3 is the only fat that consistently goes into the brain. Sources of Omega 3 are Chia seeds, flaxseeds, extra virgin olive oil, sardines, anchovies, and mackerel.</p> <p>Dark Green leafy vegetables such as broccoli, kale, and mixed greens, contain phytonutrients which are strong antioxidants. They also enhance gut health (which is strongly linked to brain health) and help in the ageing process.</p> <p>Eat the rainbow – fruit, vegetable, and grains are another powerful source of antioxidants. The rule of thumb is the brighter the colour, the better. They are rich in antioxidants and anti-ageing chemicals. Sources: blackberries (higher in Vitamin C than blueberries), apples, sweet potatoes, parsnips, brown rice, buckwheat, and gooseberries.</p> <p>Take Probiotics/Prebiotics. As a second brain, the gut communicates regularly with the brain, affecting our moods and energy levels. Recent research indicates 70% of our body's serotonin (the feel-good hormone) is made in the gut.</p> <p>Probiotics provide significant antioxidant protection and lessen the risk of developing a number of inflammation-based conditions that can affect the brain. Yoghurt is one of the best sources of probiotics. Cheddar, mozzarella, and gouda are all cheeses that contain probiotics.</p> <p>Prebiotics are the food the probiotics will thrive and grow on – they are fibres and natural sugars that stimulate the good bacteria in the gut. These foods include almonds, chicory, garlic, chickpeas, white onions, leeks, asparagus, bananas, apple cider vinegar and oats.</p> <p>Drink more water. Since 75% of the human brain is comprised of water, even negligible levels of dehydration may compromise cognitive functions,</p> |



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| | | <p>which can lead to memory-related issues and poor concentration.</p> <p>Make a conscious effort to drink more water every day. Have two glasses of water as soon as you wake up in the morning or set an alarm every hour to get up from your desk and drink a glass of water. You could add lemon, mint, or cucumber for flavour to make your drink more flavoursome and refreshing.</p> <p>Supplements. B Vitamins are important for the brain with the emphasis on Vitamin B6, Vitamin B12, Folic Acid and Choline. If you don't get enough Omega 3 in your diet it is worth looking at a good supplement as this is one of the most important nutrients in perimenopause.</p> <p>Exercise your body. Research has shown that exercise may even help with symptoms like memory issues.</p> <p>Try getting 30 minutes of cardiovascular exercise at least five days a week for a total of 150 minutes. Activities to try include walking, jogging, cycling, and water aerobics.</p> <p>Incorporate strength training into your routine as well. Try lifting free weights at home or using weight machines at your gym at least twice a week. You should aim to do eight exercises with 8 to 12 repetitions.</p> <p>Exercise your mind. Your brain needs regular workouts as you age. Try doing crossword puzzles or starting a new hobby, like playing the piano. Getting out socially may help as well.</p> <p>Practice good sleep hygiene. Sleep can be in short supply during menopause but getting a good night's rest can help improve fuzzy thinking and brain fog. Not sleeping well can make it hard to pay attention or remember new information.</p> <p>Set up a nightly ritual that you follow every day of the week to encourage deeper, more restful sleep.</p> |



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| | | <p>Keep your bedtime and wake time as consistent as possible, even on weekends.</p> <p>Make sure your bedroom is a distraction-free zone that's dark, quiet, comfortable, and cool.</p> <p>Resist eating or drinking caffeine and alcohol close to bedtime.</p> <p>Stress and anxiety can perpetuate sleep issues, so it's important to give yourself time to unwind before you go to bed. You may consider meditation, deep breathing, yoga, listening to soothing music, or having a bath, for example before you go to bed to set the mood.</p> <p>Keep stress in check. Stressful life events sometimes hit just as women are dealing with menopause symptoms. Caring for elderly parents and juggling work and home responsibilities, for example, can be big stressors for women at midlife and may contribute to attention issues and memory loss. Under stress, your body releases the hormone cortisol. Brain researchers believe constant production of cortisol can damage the part of the brain responsible for memory and learning. Finding a healthy way to de-stress can be a wonderful gift to yourself. Two options that may help with this menopause symptom are meditation and yoga.</p> <p>Some simple strategies which may be helpful in improving memory and concentration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • write everything down. • make notes and 'to do' lists of the things you need to do in the day will help organise your mind. • keep a diary. • make use of a calendar (electronic whether that be a mobile phone or laptop calendar or physical calendar) to record appointments/tasks/reminders to be achieved on that day. • sharing experiences of memory problems with other women can be reassuring. |



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| | | <p>Memory and other cognition issues associated with menopause may improve over time if you eat well, get good sleep, exercise, and keep your mind active to help with your symptoms in the meantime.</p> <p>If your “brain fog” gets worse, make an appointment with your GP to rule out other health issues or to ask about hormone treatments for menopause.</p> |
| Breast soreness | <p>Breast pain and discomfort should go away once menopause starts and oestrogen levels drop. However, it can cause significant discomfort during perimenopause due to the unpredictable spikes and falls in both oestrogen and progesterone.</p> <p>Breast pain as a symptom of the perimenopause can feel different from the type of pain experienced just before your period. During the perimenopause it may feel like a burning sensation or soreness. It can also feel like a sharp, stabbing, or throbbing pain. It may be felt in both breasts or just one breast.</p> | <p>People can take over-the-counter pain medications such as ibuprofen to treat sore breasts.</p> <p>Making lifestyle changes can also help to relieve the discomfort that sore breasts can cause.</p> <p>It may help to reduce salt consumption and drink more water, as mild dehydration causes fluid retention, which may worsen breast pain.</p> <p>Avoiding caffeine can also help to reduce breast tenderness. Some people believe that maintaining a diet low in saturated fat may relieve breast pain too.</p> <p>Other remedies and lifestyle changes that may help sore breasts include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wearing supportive bras that fit comfortably. • exercising regularly. • applying a warm compress. • avoiding smoking. • taking a hot shower. • reducing caffeine consumption. <p>It's also advisable to check your breasts on a regular basis for signs of breast cancer – How to examine your breasts.</p> |



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| | | If you have any concerns about changes to your breasts, please make an appointment with your GP. The NHS also offers free mammograms to women over the age of 50. |
| Headaches Migraines | <p>Falling oestrogen and progesterone levels can cause headaches in menopausal women and some women may even experience migraines for the first time during perimenopause.</p> <p>Women who suffer from headaches around their period due to low oestrogen levels may find headaches increase as they transition to the menopause. But after menopause, some women find that headaches and migraines lessen.</p> | <p>Diet changes. What you eat can have a huge impact on your headaches. Keep in mind that what triggers your headaches won't be the same for someone else and because of this, you may want to keep a food diary to determine what your headache triggers may be.</p> <p>When you experience a headache, write down what you ate in the hours before. Over time this may help you find dietary patterns. If a pattern emerges, you should try limiting that item. From there, you can determine if cutting this out of your diet has an effect on your headaches.</p> <p>Common dietary triggers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alcohol, especially red wine • aged cheeses, such as Parmesan • caffeine • chocolate • dairy products. <p>If keeping a diary reveals that your headaches develop just before your period, you can try these tips to help prevent a migraine:</p> <p>Eat small, frequent snacks to keep your blood sugar level up. Missing meals or going too long without food can trigger attacks. Have a small snack before going to bed and always eat breakfast. Here are 5 healthy breakfasts.</p> <p>Have a regular sleep pattern and avoid too much or too little sleep. Avoid stress. If this proves difficult, find ways to deal with stress, such as taking regular exercise and using relaxation strategies. Use these 10 stress busters.</p> |



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| Burning mouth | <p>One slightly more unusual symptom of the menopause is Burning Mouth Syndrome (BMS). It is more common in women than men and particularly women over 50 years of age. It is associated with the menopause and one study suggests it affects 18-33% of all menopausal women.</p> <p>Symptoms:</p> <p>Pain and discomfort in the mouth lips and tongue described as a tingling, scalding, numbness or burning sensation.</p> <p>Other symptoms may include a dry mouth, a bitter or metallic taste and loss of taste.</p> <p>BMS symptoms may be mild or severe, may come and go or be there permanently. There are typically several different patterns:</p> <p>It may:</p> <p>Occur every day, with little discomfort when you wake, but become worse as the day progresses.</p> <p>Start as soon as you wake up and last all day.</p> <p>Come and go.</p> | <p>Many people can find relief by using home remedies, including the following:</p> <p>Take fluids and ice. The pain of BMS sometimes improves when eating or drinking. To alleviate symptoms, you can drink plenty of water and other fluids throughout the day or suck on ice chips. Doing this will also reduce the sensation of dry mouth and may temporarily mask bad tastes.</p> <p>Avoid problematic foods and drinks. Strong-tasting or harsh foods and beverages can irritate the mouth. Limiting or avoiding the following foods can be beneficial:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acidic foods, such as tomatoes and citrus fruits. • acidic drinks, including citrus juices, sodas, and coffee. • alcohol and products containing alcohol. • spicy foods. • items containing cinnamon or mint, including herbal teas, candies, and baked goods. <p>Change dental hygiene products and habits. Oral health products, including toothpaste and mouthwashes, can irritate the lining of the mouth. It is advisable to use flavour-free toothpaste that is suitable for sensitive teeth or a toothpaste containing bicarbonate of soda (baking soda) to neutralize acid and also limit the use of mouthwash. You can use baking soda as a toothpaste or mouth rinse. Dissolve a spoonful of baking soda in lukewarm water and rinse your mouth to neutralize acid and cool the burning sensation.</p> <p>Stopping other oral habits, such as biting the tip of the tongue, may also help.</p> <p>Quit smoking. Smoking tobacco can irritate the delicate skin inside the mouth. It is best to avoid all products that contain tobacco to reduce or prevent BMS symptoms.</p> |



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| | | <p>Address medical conditions. Several conditions contribute to BMS. Individuals should discuss home remedies and medical treatments for these conditions with a GP. Controlling the underlying issue may improve symptoms.</p> <p>Reduce stress. Stress, anxiety, and depression may cause or worsen the symptoms of BMS. In turn, BMS may increase stress levels because it affects a person's quality of life.</p> |
| Bloating | <p>Low oestrogen levels can result in less fluctuating cortisol levels which increases blood sugars and slows down digestion. As oestrogen plays a role in the function of the gastrointestinal system, low levels can cause bloating, indigestion, acid reflux, stomach cramps along with nausea, flatulence, constipation, and diarrhoea.</p> <p>Due to the declining levels of oestrogen, the body tries to produce more of this hormone from elsewhere in the body. It does this via the fat cells.</p> <p>Bloating, particularly from water retention, can cause weight gain. Sometimes, it can be hard for a woman going through menopause to distinguish between weight gain and bloating.</p> <p>Menopausal bloating, unlike weight gain, is also often accompanied by a distended, swollen belly and discomfort.</p> <p>Bloating is characterized by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rapid onset of weight or size during or after meals. • changes in size and shape to the stomach throughout the day. • short periods of bloating, either after meals or during hormone fluctuations. • discomfort or pain. | <p>Avoiding bloating can be achieved with a range of easy lifestyle changes, including:</p> <p>Staying hydrated. While water retention leads to bloating, hydration keeps the gastrointestinal tract moving smoothly.</p> <p>Exercising regularly. Working up a sweat helps relieve water retention and move food through the digestive system.</p> <p>Avoiding trigger foods. Foods that cause gas retention include some beans, broccoli, and fatty, fried foods.</p> <p>Avoiding carbonated beverages. Carbonated drinks can lead to excess gas in the stomach.</p> <p>Not chewing gum. Chewing gum can cause a person to swallow air.</p> <p>Quit smoking. Smoking can cause a person to swallow air, leading to bloating.</p> <p>Reducing salt intake. Eating too much salt can cause water retention and swelling. To reduce salt content, a person should avoid processed foods.</p> <p>Eating probiotics. Yogurt, sauerkraut, kefir, and other probiotic foods can promote digestive health.</p> |



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| | <p>By contrast, weight gain will come on and stay. Weight gain often happens during menopause as a result of the metabolism slowing and can occur with or without bloating.</p> <p>Weight gain alone does not cause the stomach to distend during the day.</p> <p>On average women gain weight, particularly around their abdomen – on average gaining between 4 – 7lbs in weight during the menopause.</p> | <p>Eating smaller meals. Larger meals can be hard to digest, especially as the metabolism slows down during menopause.</p> <p>Eating a healthy and balanced diet which includes plenty of fruit and vegetables, lean proteins (fish, eggs, chicken, pulses and complex carbs such as quinoa and sweet potatoes), starchy carbohydrates and reducing saturated fat, sugar and salt. Introduce more phytoestrogen – introduce soya, lentils, chickpeas, flaxseeds, oat, and wholegrain rice into your diet which all contain phytoestrogens.</p> <p>Omega 3 fatty acids can be beneficial for many women during the menopause – as they help maintain a healthy heart and flexible joints and they also help to maintain youthful looking skin. You can increase your dietary intake by eating oily fish such as mackerel, salmon, and herring. Flaxseeds are also a great source of Omega-3.</p> <p>Check your iron levels. Many menopausal women are low in iron so it is important to be tested if you think you may be at risk.</p> <p>If a woman finds she suffers from frequent bloating during menopause, there are several medical treatments to relieve the discomfort. Ways to relieve bloating during menopause include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using over-the-counter gas medications • taking prescription water pills and diuretics • taking hormone replacement therapy (HRT) • birth control pills. <p>If bloating is painful or prolonged, then it is best to consult your GP.</p> |



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| <p>Dry, itchy skin</p> <p>Acne</p> | <p>Oestrogen is associated with the production of collagen as well as the production of natural oils that keep skin supple and prevents it from drying out. As oestrogen levels drop, this impacts on the creation of collagen and natural oils in our skin causing it to become dry and itchy.</p> <p>Raised stress levels can exacerbate itching as stress triggers the release of histamine, which can cause flushing, itching and sometimes skin rashes.</p> <p>Some women even experience acne during the perimenopause and menopause caused by decreased oestrogen and an overproduction of the male sex-hormone.</p> <p>Menopausal acne is generally a temporary condition that goes away once your hormones level out.</p> | <p>People can often prevent or treat itchy, irritated skin by following a new skin care routine or making specific diet and lifestyle changes.</p> <p>The following home remedies may help to relieve itchiness during menopause:</p> <p>Use a cool compress. Applying a cool, wet compress to itchy areas can help to soothe irritation. Covering the area with a damp towel overnight may be particularly helpful if the itching disturbs sleep.</p> <p>Take an oatmeal bath. Bathing in colloidal oatmeal can help to alleviate itchy skin. Colloidal oatmeal is oatmeal that is in a fine powder form. Suspending this powder in water enables skin to absorb the cellulose and fibre contained within the oats easily. These substances soften and soothe the skin. Use colloidal oatmeal in a warm bath. Avoid using hot water, as hot baths can make the itchiness worse. People can find colloidal oatmeal in most chemists and beauty stores or online.</p> <p>Moisturize regularly. Moisturising the skin after a bath or shower can help to lock moisture into the outermost layer of the skin. This helps to alleviate dryness and associated itching.</p> <p>Those with pruritus (itchy skin) should choose a perfume-free moisturiser suitable for dry, sensitive skin. Natural moisturisers, such as aloe vera gel or coconut oil are renowned for their skin-soothing properties.</p> <p>Drink plenty of water. This will keep your skin hydrated.</p> <p>Cut down on alcohol and nicotine as they prematurely age the skin and dry it out which will increase the chances of it becoming itchy.</p> <p>What you wear can affect how severe your itchiness can become. Wool and some synthetic fibres can irritate even the hardest of skins, so wear cotton and loose-fitting clothes. As with soap, avoid any perfumed washing detergents or softeners.</p> |



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| | | <p>Conventional medicines for itchy skin can also help relieve itchy skin, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mild steroid creams – these can be bought over the counter or on prescription from your GP. They are for short term use (no longer than a week) and for localised areas of itchy skin. • antihistamines – these are allergy treatments, although some women find them helpful for itchy skin caused by the menopause. They are available in many forms including tablets and creams. • benzocaine – this is an example of a local anaesthetic which is available as a cream and can be applied directly to the skin. <p>How to manage menopausal acne:</p> <p>Adopt a good skin regime - do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • avoid soap. Instead, wash your face daily with a cleanser that contains salicylic acid. This helps to unclog pores. • re-evaluate your cosmetic collection: oil-based products may exacerbate problems. Look for water-based or mineral cosmetics including sunscreen, moisturiser, and foundation. • wear SPF30 sunscreen. Not only is sun exposure ageing, its drying effect can cause sebaceous glands to overproduce sebum, which can encourage spots. • Make an appointment with a dermatologist or your GP if your acne doesn't improve. <p>Don't:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • over-wash or scrub your skin clean as this can irritate and inflame acne. Wash your face twice a day, plus after sweating. • use acne products designed for teens. Ageing causes the skin to become drier; your skin can't tolerate harsh treatments like it did when you were younger. • be tempted to use make-up removal wipes as they may block pores. |



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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • buy products containing pore-blocking or acne-irritating ingredients such as silicones and mica (found in powder products). • use old make-up as it can become a hotbed for bacteria. Ditch mascara after three months, foundation and lipstick after a year and eyeshadow and powder after two years. • sleep in make-up. • pick, however tempting. It may be a stress reliever but it can turn into acne excoriée. Also known as 'picker's acne', it's a condition where you feel compelled to pick your skin, which can result in scarring. <p>Eat a good healthy diet – feed your skin. Antioxidants in vitamin A, vitamin C, and vitamin E, are key for both healthy, glowing skin and acne prevention.</p> <p>Vitamin A boosts the immune system, and prevents inflammation associated with menopausal acne. Eat more: spinach, kale, carrots, sweet potatoes, dried apricots, and mango.</p> <p>Vitamin C promotes healing, cell growth and tissue repair. Eat more: oranges, grapefruit, kiwis, blueberries, pomegranate, mango, papaya, avocados, red and yellow peppers.</p> <p>Vitamin E helps to keep your skin young, smooth and free from cell damage. Eat more: almonds, peanuts, hazelnuts, sunflower seeds, avocados, spinach, asparagus, salmon, and vegetable oils including olive and sunflower oils.</p> <p>Selenium supports the immune and nervous systems and is beneficial for healthy skin. Eat more: Brazil nuts, halibut, sardines, eggs, and spinach.</p> <p>Calcium is vital for healthy bones, teeth and skin. Found in lots of the foods above but also in figs, edamame, yoghurt, and cottage cheese.</p> <p>Plant derived phytoestrogens can aid collagen production. Eat more: quinoa, legumes, chia seeds and leafy greens.</p> |



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| | | <p>Drink lots of water, limit alcohol, caffeine, and junk food.</p> |
| <p>Hair loss</p> <p>Brittle hair and nails</p> | <p>Women may notice their hair becoming thinner or even hair loss during the perimenopause, as well as brittle nails. Again, this is due to the declining levels of oestrogen and progesterone which can affect hair growth, causing it to grow more slowly, becoming thinner and even falling out.</p> <p>As oestrogen and progesterone levels fall, this triggers a group of hormones called androgens to increase. Androgens are male hormones and include testosterone and androstenedione and are present in both men and women. In women, an increase in these hormones can shrink hair follicles causing hair loss, but excess levels can also result in hair growth in unwanted places such as the face.</p> <p>Brittle nails are caused by weakening keratin layers. Keratin is a protein that nails are made up of but drops in oestrogen weaken the keratin layer of the nail causing it to break more easily. Dehydration can also cause nails to become dry and break more easily.</p> <p>The types of symptoms which come with brittle hair and nails due to the menopause are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • easy breakage of nails, lengthwise splits. • nails that peel across from corner to corner. • nails are easily cracked and chipped. • dry, limp and lacklustre hair. • hair loss and hair thinning. • hair brittle to the touch, high breakage. • slow hair growth rate. | <p>Use a nourishing lotion after washing hands and when showering. Wearing cotton gloves at night-time will help encourage an intensive moisture treatment. Using a nail oil can also help with maintaining the health of brittle nails.</p> <p>The appearance of menopausal hair loss can sometimes be improved by cosmetic practices such as reducing the use of straighteners, hair dryers and other heat damaging tools. This, along with the use of thickening shampoos and conditioners may improve hair appearance.</p> <p>Diet plays a key part in maintaining healthy hair and nails throughout the menopause. Ensuring you have a rich and healthy diet is vital. Essential fatty acids, such as those found in almonds or avocado are important for strengthening your nails. Eating as few as 6 almonds a day may have a positive impact on your nail health. Also ensure that you have sufficient magnesium in your diet to allow your calcium intake to be absorbed effectively. Eat a diet rich in wholegrains, nuts, dried fruit and seeds.</p> |



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| Dry eyes | <p>Approximately 61% of perimenopausal and menopausal women are affected by dry eyes. Dry eyes are caused by problems with your tears. Everyone has a tear film that covers and lubricates their eyes. The tear film is a complex mixture of water, oil, and mucus. Dry eyes occur when you don't produce enough tears or when your tears are ineffective. This can cause a gritty feeling, like something in your eye.</p> <p>Symptoms of dry eyes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stinging • burning • blurred vision • irritation • itchy eyes • red eyes • excessive tearing • foreign body sensation. <p>As people age, tear production decreases. Being older than 50 increases your risk of dry eyes, regardless of your sex.</p> <p>Postmenopausal women, however, are particularly prone to dry eyes. Sex hormones like androgens and oestrogen affect tear production in some way, but the exact relationship is unknown.</p> <p>Researchers used to assume that low oestrogen levels were causing dry eyes in postmenopausal women, but new investigations are focusing on the role of androgens. Androgens are sex hormones that both men and women have. Women have lower levels of androgens to begin with, and those levels decrease after menopause. It's possible</p> | <p>You can decrease your risk of dry eyes by avoiding environmental triggers. Things that lead to tear evaporation include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dry winter air • wind • outdoor activities like skiing, running, and boating • air-conditioning • contact lenses • allergies. <p>Over-the-counter medication: several over-the-counter medications are available to treat chronic dry eye problems. In most cases, artificial tears will be enough to ease your symptoms. When choosing among the many OTC eye drops on the market, keep in mind the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drops with preservatives can irritate your eyes if you use them too much. • drops without preservatives are safe to use more than four times per day. They come in single-serving droppers. • lubricating ointments and gels provide a long-lasting thick coating, but they can cloud your vision. • drops that reduce redness can be irritating if used too often. <p>Alternative treatments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limit your screen time. If you work at a computer all day, remember to take breaks because we blink less frequently when in front of a computer screen, which encourages our eyes to dry out more quickly. Close your eyes for a few minutes, or blink repeatedly for a few seconds. • remember to blink regularly, not only when using a computer, but when reading and driving. • lower your computer screen. If your eyelids are lower, and your eyes are less open during prolonged computer use, you can reduce the surface area from which the tears evaporate. |



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| | that androgens play a role in managing the delicate balance of tear production. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • remove drafts. Avoid using a ceiling fan while you sleep and turn air vents away from your face. • protect your eyes. Sunglasses that wrap around the face can block wind and dry air. They can help when you're running or biking. • avoid triggers. Irritants like smoke and pollen can make your symptoms more severe, as can activities like biking and boating. • try a humidifier. Keeping the air in your home or office moist may help. • eat right. A diet rich in Omega 3 fatty acids and vitamin A can encourage healthy tear production. • drink plenty of water. When you become dehydrated, one of the first places your body will take fluid from is your eyes. • avoid contact lenses. Contact lenses can make dry eyes worse. Talk to your doctor about switching to glasses or specially designed contact lenses. <p>Your GP may prescribe different types of medication depending on your condition. Additionally, seek advice from your optician.</p> |
| Dizziness Vertigo | <p>Whilst dizziness may be related to getting older, both vertigo and dizziness can also be symptoms of the perimenopause caused by a drop in oestrogen levels. Declining oestrogen levels can impact blood circulation, the nervous system, and blood pressure by reducing the reactivity of the artery walls. This in turn, affects the brain resulting in dizzy spells.</p> <p>Women experiencing brief unexpected moments of dizziness may make them feel unsettled for a time, even after the sensation has eased. There are three types of sensation that can be experienced with dizziness: the feeling that everything is spinning or whirling; a feeling of loss of balance; or a feeling as if you are going to faint.</p> | <p>The following may help reduce the symptoms of dizziness.</p> <p>Staying hydrated. Drink plenty of fluids, especially water. Many people do not realise the importance of keeping hydrated. During the menopause, hormone fluctuations may change your body's ability to retain water, so you may find yourself having to drink more water.</p> <p>Don't stand up too quickly – jumping up or moving your head suddenly can lead to a bout of dizziness. Standing up slowly can help your inner ears as well as your blood slowly acclimatise to standing. If you take things gently for a while you may find your symptoms easing.</p> <p>Eating frequent small meals and snacks. This helps maintain blood sugar levels. People should opt for foods with complex carbohydrates,</p> |



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| | <p>Dizziness may occur as a result of other menopause symptoms such as anxiety, hot flushes, stress or panic attacks. If suffering from these symptoms, breathing and heart rate levels become rapid and unsteady. This change in breathing can disturb the flow of blood and oxygen to the brain, causing dizziness.</p> <p>In some cases, dizziness may not be related to the menopause, but be triggered by another medical condition or health problems such as low blood sugar, low blood pressure, low iron levels, dehydration, viral infections or ear infections. If this is the case then you will need to seek medical advice to clear the problem.</p> | <p>such as whole grains and vegetables. The body breaks these down more slowly, so they help maintain a steady supply of energy.</p> <p>Establishing a regular sleep schedule. Have a consistent bedtime and waking time. Regular exercise and healthy eating can also improve sleep.</p> <p>Managing stress. This can be done through exercise, meditation, yoga and asking for help when you need it. Counselling may help people with severe or ongoing stress and anxiety. A healthy diet can also be beneficial.</p> <p>Doing balance exercises to strengthen the muscles that support balance.</p> <p>Keeping a journal to help identify foods, activities, and medications that may trigger symptoms.</p> <p>Seeking medical help if new symptoms occur or existing symptoms persist, get worse, or are severe, and ultimately affect the quality of your life.</p> |
| <p>Insomnia</p> <p>Difficulty sleeping</p> <p>Sleep disruption</p> | <p>Hormonal changes and fluctuation in oestrogen and progesterone during the perimenopause can have a drastic impact on sleep.</p> <p>Oestrogen is important for managing the level of magnesium in the body. Magnesium is used by the body to help muscles relax and low levels can make it more difficult to fall asleep. In addition, falling oestrogen levels cause hot flushes and night sweats which can also impact the natural sleep cycle.</p> <p>Progesterone also plays a key role as it helps you fall asleep and stay asleep. Fluctuating and declining levels of this hormone will make it more difficult to slip into a deep sleep. It can also impact the quality of sleep making you feel tired in the morning.</p> | <p>If you feel that your sleep problems are related to hot flushes and sweats then simple steps may help, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keeping your room well ventilated (try leaving a window or door open at night) or use a fan in the bedroom. • a course of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) may also help. <p>Some simple steps may help you minimise sleep disruption:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make sure you have a regular bedtime schedule which should include going to bed at the same time every night. • avoid taking phones, or other technology into the bedroom. • avoid caffeine after mid-afternoon. |



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| | <p>There are a range of sleep disruption factors that may affect you during the menopause – including hot flushes, mood disorders, insomnia, and sleep-disordered breathing. Sleep problems can be very disruptive – may lead to daytime drowsiness and are often accompanied by anxiety and depression. They may also cause you to have trouble concentrating during the day.</p> <p>This symptom of the menopause can be the most disturbing and disruptive.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> look for a guided meditation to help get to sleep. Mat's guided meditation recording (30 minutes) from our Wellbeing Pages can be downloaded on to your own personal devices. <p>If your symptoms continually keep you up at night, make an appointment to see your GP to discuss possible treatment options.</p> |
| Vaginal dryness | <p>It is estimated that up to 60% of women experience moderate to severe vaginal dryness because of menopause.</p> <p>It is caused by a reduction in oestradiol, a type of oestrogen during the perimenopause and menopause.</p> <p>Vaginal dryness can cause an itchy or sore vagina, pain or discomfort during sex, a need to urinate more often and can make you more susceptible to urinary tract infections.</p> <p>Vaginal dryness is a painful condition which can impact on quality of life and relationships.</p> | <p>Some small lifestyle changes can go a long way to helping you to manage your symptoms.</p> <p>Try to eat a healthy, balanced diet that incorporates omega 3 fatty acids like those found in oily fish and nuts.</p> <p>Always remember to stay hydrated, too. Adequate hydration will help to keep all your cells hydrated and lubricated and may help in the production of vaginal fluid.</p> <p>Vaginal moisturisers/lubrication can help relieve dryness and irritation – speak to your GP for further information on the best one for you.</p> <p>Avoiding perfumed soaps/washes and bubble baths can improve symptoms. Bubble bath products, scented soaps and lotions can worsen dryness around the sensitive vaginal area. Also, in terms of underwear, a cotton underwear is the best choice to wear on a regular basis as some man-made fabrics cause irritation.</p> <p>Vaginal dryness can be an embarrassing condition – however it is a very common condition and a normal process of the menopause. Please try and not feel embarrassed or uncomfortable talking to someone about it,</p> |



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| | | and if it is impacting on the quality of your life, it is well worth discussing your symptoms with your GP who can explore hormone treatment that best suits you (whether this is HRT or topical hormone treatments, which apply oestrogen directly to the vaginal area to replace some of the hormone that your body no longer produces). Women's Health Concern (the patient arm of the British Menopause Society) has some advice for preparing for a conversation with your GP about this topic. |
| <p>Increased need to urinate</p> <p>Urinary Tract Infections</p> | <p>Women may experience the need to go to the toilet more often or in some cases lose control of their bladder during the perimenopause. This is because the pelvic muscles weaken as you age and the vagina and urethra lose their elasticity. So, for example, you may find that exercise, coughing, laughing, lifting heavy objects, or performing any other movement that puts pressure on the bladder can cause small amounts of urine to leak.</p> <p>More urinary tract infections (UTIs) may be experienced as well due to lower levels of oestrogen. Symptoms of a urinary tract infection include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a persistent urge to urinate even when your bladder is not full. • burning or pain when urinating. • passing frequent small amounts of urine. • cloudy urine. • pink, red or brownish urine. • strong-smelling urine. | <p>Drink plenty of water to help flush out the bacteria from your urinary tract. You can also try drinking cranberry or lemon juice as these have mild antibiotic properties and may help to ease infection. You should try to drink these with only naturally occurring sugar. They can also act as a preventative measure against bladder infections.</p> <p>Cut caffeine and alcohol from your diet during an infection, as these irritate the bladder and will worsen symptoms of pain and burning. They may also cause recovery from infection to slow down.</p> <p>It is important to urinate as much as you need; holding on when you need to go to the toilet can cause bacteria to build up in the urinary tract, making you more prone to infection. If you are suffering from an infection, this is particularly important, as this will encourage the bacteria to leave the system.</p> <p>See your GP if you have a suspected bladder infection, particularly if there is blood in the urine or symptoms have lasted for more than 48 hours. A GP will ask for a urine sample to check for the presence of bacteria and certain chemicals associated with infection. If a diagnosis of a urine infection is confirmed by your GP, they will prescribe oral antibiotics to fight the bacterial infection. Treatment of a bladder infection or UTI should not be delayed as the infection may worsen or spread.</p> <p>Strengthen your pelvic floor muscles with exercises which are simple clench and release exercises that you can do to make your pelvic floor stronger. Once you understand these exercises, you can do them anytime</p> |



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| | | and anywhere – in the privacy of your own home or while waiting in the queue at the supermarket! For further information watch MenoHealth's short video and read their exercise instructions. |
| Osteoporosis | <p>It is important to keep bones healthy.</p> <p>Up to 20% of bone density can be lost in women in the five to seven years after the menopause. The reduction in bone density is caused by the decreased levels of oestrogen which helps to protect bone strength.</p> <p>It is important to remember that although bone density reduces, the risk of developing osteoporosis remains low until you get older although it can affect someone of any age.</p> <p>If you have osteoporosis (thinning of the bones), you have bones that will break (fracture) more easily than normal, especially if you have an injury such as a fall.</p> | <p>Ensuring you eat the correct foods and get the right amount of necessary nutrients can help you manage your bone strength and density.</p> <p>Ensure your Calcium intake. Due to approximately 40% of the total mineral mass of our bones being calcium, and as a result of the body's natural ageing process, the amount of calcium in the bones declines, especially in menopausal women, it is important to get the right amount of calcium in the diet.</p> <p>Sources of calcium include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dairy products such as milk, cheese, yoghurt. • green leafy vegetables such as watercress, spinach, okra and kale. • fish eaten with bones such as sardines. • sesame seeds. • fortified feeds such as bread, breakfast cereals and diary alternative such as soya. <p>The recommended daily intake for calcium in adults over the age of 50 is at least 1000mg per day.</p> <p>You can get 1000mg of calcium most easily by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drinking a pint of milk a day (this can include semi-skimmed or skimmed milk); plus • eating 50g (2 oz) of hard cheese such as cheddar or edam, or one pot of yoghurt (125 g), or 50 g of sardines. |



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| | | <p>Take Vitamin D. A reduction in Vitamin D, along with low oestrogen levels, is a key factor in predicting bone loss in adults. Vitamin D is unique in that it is produced in our skin when we are exposed to sunlight, so it is important to get sufficient exposure to sunlight during the months of April to September.</p> <p>There are only a few foods that are a good source of Vitamin D: cooked salmon, mackerel and tuna fish or sardines (both canned in oil).</p> <p>Calcium and Vitamin D work together because our body needs Vitamin D to absorb calcium. Vitamin D increases the absorption of calcium from the intestine which is needed to keep our teeth and bones healthy. If your exposure to the sun is limited then you may wish to consider supplementing your Vitamin D intake all year round to reduce the risk of deficiency and keep your bones healthy.</p> <p>You can also take Calcium and or Vitamin D supplements.</p> <p>Exercise can help to prevent osteoporosis. The pulling and tugging on the bones by your muscles during exercise help to stimulate bone-making cells and strengthen your bones. Regular weight-bearing exercise throughout life is best but it is never too late to start. This means exercise where your feet and legs bear your body's weight, such as brisk walking, aerobics, dancing, running, etc. For older people, a regular walk is a good start. However, the more vigorous the exercise, the better. For most benefit you should exercise regularly - aiming for at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise or physical activity at least five times per week. (Note: because swimming is not weight-bearing exercise, this is not so helpful in preventing osteoporosis.)</p> <p>Muscle strengthening exercises are also important. They help to give strength to the supporting muscles around bones. This helps to increase tone, improve balance, etc, which may help to prevent you from falling. Examples of muscle strengthening exercises include press-ups and weightlifting but you do not necessarily have to lift weights in a gym. There</p> |



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| | | are some simple exercises that you can do at home. YouTube provides a wealth of videos to help you with your exercise regime. |
| Backache | <p>Studies have shown that lower back pain tends to increase in perimenopause, with up to 50% of women experiencing this.</p> <p>Some main reasons for back pain:</p> <p>Women do tend to put on a bit more weight during the menopause and that can have a big impact on our back and hips which can be one of the main triggers for back pain.</p> <p>Hormonal changes. We know that oestrogen is needed to keep your disks and your ligaments and your tendons nice and flexible. And as the oestrogen decreases, this can cause a shrinking of the spine, just ever so slightly. That can then impact on both movement and flexibility of your spine as well. That in itself can cause a lot of discomfort and back pain.</p> <p>Stress and anxiety: if we are stressed and anxious, and this is on-going, the chemicals that are associated with the stress response are very inflammatory. As time goes by, these inflammatory chemicals can circulate around the body and they can affect the joints anywhere – with quite a lot of them focusing on the spine.</p> <p>Postural changes. If we are spending too long stuck at our desk, if we're not moving, and if we are not getting a lot of exercise, then the upper back can become affected. Problems in the upper back can be transferred to the lower back, with pressure being put on the lower spine ending up with backache.</p> | <p>Drink lots of water. As well as helping to hydrate the kidneys, it will make sure that your joints, ligaments, and tendons are staying hydrated as well.</p> <p>Don't slouch. Give yourself a little check now and again regarding this. It's not just your posture when you are sitting or when you are at your computer, but it's also when you are standing as well. There are lots of videos on YouTube which will help improve your posture. The Alexander Technique and Pilates are good ways to help you figure out where you may be going wrong if you feel that your posture is getting worse.</p> <p>Stay active during the day. Our bodies were not designed to stay sedentary for long periods at a time and doing so can contribute to back pain. If you are committed to working on a desk chair, a car seat, or the couch, try to get up and move more to improve the extent of your back pain. If you can, take the time to perform some daily back strengthening exercises, stretches or simply take a short stroll. These Gentle exercise videos designed to be done at your desk (produced in partnership with physiotherapists from Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital) may encourage you to keep moving during the day.</p> <p>Stretching. Try and increase your stretching – starting with a good stretch in the morning to get your body supple and improve flexibility.</p> <p>Make sure you are wearing the right bra: the wrong bra fit can cause back pain or make existing back pain worse. It can also affect your posture which in turn affects your ligaments, joints, and tendons.</p> <p>Manage your weight. Being overweight or obese puts more strain on the muscles and joints as well as other aspects of our health. Reducing weight can help ease discomfort.</p> |



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| | <p>Dehydration. The other really important thing which most people don't even associate with back pain is dehydration. If you are dehydrated, which many women are during the menopause due to falling oestrogen and also due to flushes and sweats, that can put a lot of pressure on your kidneys. Your kidneys will struggle because of the dehydration. And that can very often give you lower backache, a kind of constant ache. Very often, this one will be either side of the spine rather than just on the spine itself. If you find that you're getting this kind of dull ache on both sides of your spine regularly, then it could be a sign that your kidneys are desperate for a good drink of water.</p> | <p>Consider your sleep environment and position. Poor sleep can affect your back, especially if you have the wrong mattress or pillows. It is advised that you change your mattress every eight years. Too flat pillows or too many pillows can affect your neck and that again can cause problems lower down the back. Sleeping on your stomach puts your back in an unnatural position.</p> <p>There are a few sleeping positions which may help reduce the severity of back pain:</p> <p>Sleep position 1</p> <p>Sleep on your side with your legs pulled up into a foetal position and pop a pillow between your knees. This opens up the spine and can relieve any strain on the back and pelvis.</p> <p>Sleep position 2</p> <p>If you prefer to sleep on your back, place a couple of pillows under your knees to raise the legs. This provides extra support for the back and has the same effect as curling up on your side.</p> <p>Sleep position 3</p> <p>If you like to sleep on your front, try to change to a different sleeping position. Lying on your front 'chokes' the spine and causes the neck to twist unnaturally. This could, in turn, contribute to neck or upper back strain. However, if you do have to sleep on your front because this is your favourite position, place a pillow under your tummy and pelvis to raise the lower abdomen and open the spine up a little.</p> |



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| Painful muscles and joints | <p>Joint pain is one of the more common menopause symptoms and it can be one of the more debilitating as it reduces mobility and flexibility.</p> <p>Joints which are involved in high impact movements such as the hips and knees tend to be most affected. The elbows, neck, shoulders, hands and fingers can also be affected by joint pain.</p> <p>There are a number of causes of joint pain during menopause including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hormonal changes • dehydration • stress • weight gain • diet • poor posture • increased sensitivity to pain. <p>Falling oestrogen levels are thought to be one of the main causes of joint pain during menopause. Oestrogen is responsible for regulating fluid levels in the body; therefore if levels of this hormone are low, the body becomes less able to hold water, which can affect the hydration and lubrication of the joint tissues, including the cartilage, ligaments and tendons.</p> <p>Up to 80% of cartilage is water, making it a very important component of this flexible and protective tissue which acts as a cushion between the bones, absorbing shock, and easing friction. Water is also part of synovial fluid, a gel-like liquid which lubricates the cartilage and helps the joints move without creating friction.</p> | <p>There are lots of simple and natural things you can do to help ease the discomfort of menopausal joint pain and to support your joint health.</p> <p>Drink plenty of water. Since dehydration can have such a negative impact on your joints, one of the first things you should do if you experience joint pain, is to make sure you are drinking enough water. You should be looking to drink around 1.5 – 2 litres of plain water (not artificially flavoured or sweetened) every day, over and above drinks such as coffee and tea.</p> <p>If your joints are sore or creaky first thing then ease off as the day goes on, it may mean that you are really dehydrated during the night, so make sure that you drink a small glass of plain water about an hour before bed – this is really important if you are getting night sweats as these will dehydrate you further.</p> <p>Strengthen your muscles and joints. Whilst exercising is probably the last thing you want to do when your joints feel achy and sore, staying active is very important as it helps to increase the strength and flexibility of your joints, as well as in the muscles that surround the joints. Good options include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non-weight bearing exercises (swimming, water aerobics and cycling). • low impact weight bearing exercises (walking, low impact aerobics and dancing). • resistant, non-impact exercises (pilates and yoga). <p>Weight-bearing exercise are thought to help protect our bone mineral density as we age and can also help build muscle, which takes the pressure off your joints.</p> <p>Focus on strengthening the muscles around the hip and knee joints as these are the joints that needs to support your entire body weight.</p> |



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| | <p>Water is also needed to help support the flexibility and elasticity of the ligaments and tendons. Ligaments connect one bone to another and are needed for joint stability, whilst tendons connect your muscles to the bones. When your ligaments and tendons lose their elasticity, your range and ease of movement can be reduced.</p> <p>Therefore, without enough water, the flexibility and lubrication of the joint tissues can all be affected. When this protective and supportive nature is impaired, it can cause aches, pains and stiffness to develop.</p> <p>Fluctuating oestrogen levels may also give rise to underlying, low-grade inflammation as a result of the effects it has on the functions of joints, which could also be a factor in menopause joint pain.</p> <p>Dehydration. Not drinking enough water and excessive sweating during the menopause can also contribute to dehydration at this time. If you find that you experience joint pain and stiffness more in the morning, then dehydration during the night could be a contributory factor, especially if you are also experiencing night sweats.</p> <p>Dehydration can also make it difficult for your kidneys to get rid of excess uric acid, which can cause a build-up of tiny, sharp crystals in and around joints, making them inflamed and sore. This is identified as gout, a type of arthritis which affects joints towards the ends of the limbs such as your toes and fingers.</p> | <p>High impact exercise such as jogging on hard roads can exacerbate joint pain, although this is often eased with rest or with the use of compression stockings. It's best to limit exercises which involve lots of pounding on your joints such as running and jumping. In contrast, low impact non weight bearing exercise can be gentler on the joints but still help to build strength and increase the range of movements. Therefore incorporating flexibility and non-impact stretch work into your exercise plans is also a good option.</p> <p>Gentle stretching is great for maintaining mobility and movement. The cat and cow pose is a good example of a gentle pose which can help to improve the flexibility of the spine and stretch out tension, stiffness, and discomfort in the back. As an added bonus, these gentler movements can also incorporate controlled breathing techniques to help promote relaxation and manage stress.</p> <p>Eat foods that can help to ease joint pain. Diet is really important when it comes to joint health because what you eat can impact how your joints are feeling. Whilst some foods can trigger joint pain or make it worse, others can have a positive influence on your joint health.</p> <p>Reducing inflammation is a key part of reducing joint pain and improving overall joint health. Some of the most beneficial anti-inflammatory foods include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • omega 3 rich foods – these contain oils which have a positive effect on inflammation. Examples include oily fish such as herring, mackerel, sardines, salmon and tuna. Walnuts, almonds, chia seeds and soybeans are also rich in omega-3 fatty acid. • antioxidant-rich foods – chemicals called anthocyanins are powerful antioxidants that help reduce inflammation. You can find them in brightly coloured fruit and vegetables such as cherries, raspberries, blueberries and broccoli. |



| Symptom: | Description of symptoms: | What you can do to help manage the symptoms: |
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| | <p>Stress can have a negative effect on your joint health. If you are experiencing a lot of stress, your body will release high quantities of the hormone cortisol. This hormone works as an inflammatory agent when present long-term, and so high levels of stress during the menopause will only make your joint pain worse.</p> <p>Stress can also cause our muscles to tense up; this tension causes our joints to work so much harder which can lead to further inflammation and discomfort. It is important that if you tend to experience stress to take time to relax every day.</p> <p>Weight gain. Excess weight puts additional pressure on weight-bearing joints such as the knees and hips. According to Arthritis.org, every pound of excess weight exerts about 4 pounds of extra pressure on the knees. Unfortunately, weight gain is an all-too-common problem during menopause. Falling oestrogen levels can cause a problem with carbohydrate metabolism in some women, making it very easy to put on weight. Stress and lack of activity throughout the menopause can also cause weight gain. Losing even just a few pounds can help take the pressure off your joints, improving mobility and relieving pain.</p> <p>Diet. Carbohydrates aren't the only foods that can be a problem during menopause. There are many foods which can trigger joint pain. Sugary foods, high salt and processed food, as well as caffeine, fizzy drinks and dairy can all trigger inflammation in the joints and aggravate joint pain. Sometimes cutting out these trigger foods can make a huge difference.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> other anti-inflammatory foods – many fruit and vegetables have properties which reduce inflammation so try and keep to a healthy diet with lots of fresh food such as pineapple, apples, avocados and mushrooms. Other food which can help include virgin olive oil, dark chocolates and spices such as ginger. <p>Heat it up or cool it down? Not sure whether to use heat or ice for your joint pain? Both are inexpensive and easy ways to ease pain but help in different ways.</p> <p>Heat, such as heating pads or warm baths, tend to work best for stiffness. Heat can help improve the flexibility of tendons and ligaments which can ease stiff joints, as well as relax and soothe tired muscles.</p> <p>Cold therapies such as ice packs can help to numb nerve endings, dulling pain and restricting blood vessels, slowing circulation and reducing swelling.</p> <p>Alternative treatments and therapies. Massage or acupuncture help many women with their joint pain symptoms. They directly target the area of pain in order to ease the symptom.</p> <p>Acupuncture can help relieve pain and is also good for balancing your hormones.</p> <p>You may want to consider making an appointment to see a chiropractor or osteopath as they can detect if any joints are out of line and also recommend exercises to help.</p> <p>When to consult your GP?</p> <p>It's important to get your symptoms checked by your doctor; this will make sure that menopause is at the root of your joint pain and not something else such as arthritis and osteoporosis.</p> |



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| | <p>Poor posture. Slouching puts extra pressure on your joints. It limits your range of motion and makes it so much harder for your muscles to take the load off your joints and in time, it can cause misalignment of the spine which eventually leads to even more joint stress and pain.</p> <p>When experiencing pain, you are also more inclined to hold yourself differently, repositioning your body to take pressure off the painful area, but this is likely to put added pressure on other areas.</p> <p>Also, if your joints, ligaments and tendons are affected, this can alter your whole posture, pulling on your muscles and causing both joint and muscle aches at the same time.</p> <p>Increased sensitivity to pain. Sleeping poorly is notorious during menopause and research has proved that sleep deprivation increases our sensitivity to pain. Low magnesium can also impact your pain perception as well as causing sleep problems. Poor levels of this essential nutrient are very common during menopause due to stress and digestive weakness.</p> <p>Magnesium is also needed to keep your muscles relaxed, so low levels can cause them to tense up and become tight and stiff, which can impact the muscles that control movement of the joints.</p> <p>What does menopausal joint pain feel like?</p> <p>Feeling achy, stiff and creaky and sometimes experiencing a burning feeling around the joints are typical symptoms of menopausal joint pain. These may be worse in the morning, improving as the day continues.</p> | <p>If your pain is severe, and lifestyle and diet changes, supplements and alternative therapies are ineffective, then there may be another underlying cause. In this case, or if you are worried about your condition, it is important to talk to your doctor as they will be able to prescribe a treatment to help you.</p> |



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| | <p>While pain can be localised to individual joints or a few joints, many women also describe a feeling of aching all over.</p> <p>Women have also reported instances where old injuries from childhood or more recently have been known to ache again. If a specific area is feeling tender it is worthwhile thinking back to previous injuries or any instances of mild trauma which might have occurred to that area.</p> <p>Most women do find that symptoms such as joint pain begin to ease off through the menopause as hormone levels even out and stabilise. However, this can also depend on your general health, stress levels, diet, exercise etc. Therefore, looking after yourself well at this time is very important.</p> | |