

# Appointment information

You have made an appointment to discuss menopausal symptoms. There is a lot to cover during the appointment, so it can be helpful to do some reading beforehand to get the most out of your time.

## What is Menopause?

Menopause marks the end of a woman's menstrual cycle usually occurring on average between 45-55. Fluctuating and declining levels of oestrogen in the run up to this and afterwards are what causes the disruptive symptoms of the menopause such as hot flushes, sweats, anxiety, sleep disturbance, joint aches, skin changes, period irregularity, heavy bleeding and vaginal dryness.

## How to Manage Symptoms:

Symptoms can improve and be managed through diet, exercise, lifestyle, alternative treatments and CBT.

### Diet

The Mediterranean diet has been shown to have beneficial effects in managing menopause symptoms. It also has the added benefit of improving your heart and bone and mental health:

- <https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/menopause-diet.html>

You might like to consider adding a couple of portions of fermented foods to your diet, such as: kefir, kimchi, kombucha.

Reducing alcohol and caffeine can reduce the frequency of hot flushes, improve sleep and mental health.

## Complementary, alternative and lifestyle treatments

Exercise and relaxation techniques are key in self management of menopausal symptoms.

- <http://mft.nhs.uk/app/uploads/sites/4/2024/04/SMPIL-24-007-Exercise-Nutrition-Lifestyle-in-Menopause.pdf>
- <http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/menopause-and-mental-health/self-care-for-menopause>

There is some evidence that black cohosh improves flushes, anxiety and sleep

- Menoherb is a good brand

Magnesium may also be useful for sleep:

- <https://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/complementaryalternative-therapies-menopausal-women/>
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## Medical Treatment:

Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) is medication that can be given to aid symptoms of menopause. There are 2 main hormones involved in HRT- Oestrogen and Progesterone and in most circumstances both MUST be prescribed.

**Oestrogen** is an important hormone that is used in many parts of the body. It is for this reason women get a wide variety of symptoms, such as: hot flushes, night sweats, mood changes, sleep disturbances, joint pains and vaginal dryness. Replacing oestrogen helps to relieve many of these symptoms.

## Progesterone

If you have a womb, you will also need to take the hormone progesterone to protect the womb lining from oestrogen.

Progesterone is prescribed in different ways depending on what stage you are at in your menopause journey.

1. Sequential HRT: used if you are still having periods ie perimenopausal. progesterone is added for part of the month, often causing monthly bleeding.
2. Continuous HRT: used if you are not having periods- progesterone is taken daily. Women who have had a hysterectomy or have their progesterone from a Mirena coil do not need additional progesterone.

### **Forms of HRT:**

HRT is available to be taken in several forms to suit individual preferences and medical needs.

Oestrogen can be delivered in different forms:

- Tablets (oral)
- Patches (applied to the skin)
- Gels or Sprays
- Vaginal Creams, Rings, or Tablets (for local symptoms like dryness)

Progesterone can be delivered in different forms:

- Tablets
- Patches- combined with oestrogen • Mirena Coil

### **Benefits of HRT**

- Reduces symptoms occurring due to lower oestrogen levels- e.g. hot flushes, night sweats, poor sleep, irritable mood, brain fog, dry skin, thin hair and general poor quality of life.
- Prevents bone thinning (osteoporosis)
- May reduce the risk of bowel cancer

### **Risks of HRT**

- Breast Cancer: a slightly increased risk with combined HRT, especially with longer use. The risk reduces after stopping HRT
- Blood Clots: higher risk with tablet forms of HRT, but not patches or gels
- Stroke: slightly increased with oral HRT, especially in women over 60.

### **Things to Consider**

- HRT is most beneficial when started before age 60 or within 10 years of menopause.
- Your personal and family medical history will help determine the best type of HRT for you.

While you are waiting for your appointment, you may wish to look at some interesting and useful websites on the Menopause such as:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>

<https://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/>

<https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>

### **Prior to your appointment:**

- write a list of your most troublesome symptoms to discuss these at your appointment
- through reception ensure you have arranged: recent BP, height and weight
- it's also a good opportunity to have a general health check-up, so if you haven't had a blood test for cholesterol and diabetes in the last year, please arrange this.

**Always discuss your symptoms, health history, and concerns with your healthcare professional to make an informed decision about menopause management.**



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