

Emotional wellness in menopause

Hormonal changes in menopause not only affect physical health, they can also have an impact on emotional and mental wellness. Feelings of anxiety, low mood and difficulty concentrating are all common symptoms of menopause.

Other emotional and cognitive symptoms can include:

- Anger
- Brain fog
- Crying spells
- Depression
- Irritability
- Loss of confidence and self-esteem
- Loss of joy
- Mood swings
- Panic attacks
- Poor motivation

Although less visible, these symptoms can be as debilitating as any physical symptom and shouldn't be dismissed out of hand. Help is available. A woman doesn't need to feel alone or struggle to cope.

Can poor sleep make things worse?

Poor or disturbed sleep is a very common symptom of menopause, with some studies indicating up to 63% of women are affected. It can make emotional and cognitive symptoms feel even worse if left untreated. Frustratingly, there are many reasons for sleep disturbance, both hormonal and non-hormonal, and it can take time to identify causes and treatments for this.

Identifying and treating sleep disturbance can help manage other menopause symptoms. Talk to your healthcare professional. They are there to offer help and support. Don't suffer in silence.

What treatments are available?

There is no one size fits all for women when it comes to managing physical or psychological symptoms of menopause, but a variety of treatments are available.

- Anti-depressants can help with emotional and cognitive symptoms of the menopause. However, unless you have been diagnosed with depression, there are other treatments which may be more helpful and appropriate.

- Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) can help with many cognitive and emotional symptoms of menopause. HRT can also help improve quality of sleep. It's useful to keep a record of symptoms to discuss with your healthcare professional as this will help identify the best HRT regime for you.
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and other talking therapies can be beneficial in dealing with some of the emotional symptoms of menopause. Even women who have never used therapies before find them helpful to navigate their menopause journey.
- Mindfulness and meditation are popular techniques to help relax and clear the mind - a very useful addition to managing some of the emotional and cognitive symptoms of menopause. Alongside restorative exercise such as yoga and Pilates, both body and mind can recover and heal.

What about depression?

Mood changes that can accompany menopause can be distressing and need to be taken seriously. However, they are different from clinical depression where mood is persistently low.

Menopause does increase a woman's risk of developing depression, and if emotional and cognitive symptoms of menopause are ignored, they can develop into more serious depression. Don't ignore how you feel and if you, or someone close to you, are suffering from depression please do speak to a healthcare professional. There is no shame seeking help.

How do I improve my confidence and self-esteem?

Menopause is a significant time in a woman's life and it's important to take time to adjust to both physical and emotional changes. Give yourself the space you need to understand and accept the changes you're experiencing – however long that takes. Every woman's journey and adjustment will be different.

How can I help myself?

Life is busy, and it can feel impossible to free up any time when general life, work, friendships and caring for other people all take priority. But selfcare isn't selfish or indulgent. A half hour walk, a meditation class, some yoga and even a soak in the bath can give you the time you need. Whatever you do, make time for you every day.

It's also important to talk about how you feel. That may be family, friends, colleagues or some form of online support. Only you will know who feels right for you to open up to, but unless you tell someone how you're feeling they won't know and they won't be able to help. There's no shame in asking for help. Your emotional wellbeing will thank you.

Useful contacts

MIND

www.mind.org.uk

WHC Fact Sheet | Understanding and managing sleep problems during menopause

WHC Fact Sheet | Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) for menopausal symptoms

WHC Fact Sheet | Complementary & alternative therapies

www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/

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This Women's Health Concern fact sheet provides information and guidance, to be used in consultation with your own healthcare professional. It has been reviewed by the medical advisory council of the British Menopause Society and it will be updated when guidance changes and/or new data becomes available.

Women's Health Concern is the patient arm of the BMS

We provide independent advice to inform and reassure women about their gynaecological, sexual and post reproductive health.

www.womens-health-concern.org

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