

Skeltons Chemists

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Opening Times

Monday to Friday - 8.30am - 5.30pm

Saturday - 8.30am - 3pm

Sundays & Bank Holidays - Closed

Your FREE Healthy Living Leaflet for July 2023

1. What is menopause?
2. What is perimenopause?
3. What are the symptoms?
4. When does this happen?
5. How long do the symptoms last?
6. What treatment is there?
7. How does HRT work?
8. What are the benefits and risks of taking HRT?
9. What if I don't want to take HRT?
10. What if I don't want to take tablets at all?



MENOPAUSE *matters*

Answers on the bottom of page two

Menopause

Menopause is when your periods stop due to lower hormone levels and usually happens between the ages of 45 and 55. It can sometimes happen earlier naturally, or if you have had your ovaries or womb removed, had cancer treatments or for genetic reasons. Perimenopause is when you have symptoms before your periods stop. You reach menopause when your periods have stopped for 12 months. Menopause and perimenopause can cause symptoms like anxiety, mood swings, brain fog, hot flushes and irregular periods. These problems can start years before your periods stop and carry on afterwards.

The symptoms can have a big impact on your life, including relationships, social life, family life and work but it is different for everyone. You may have a number of the symptoms or none. The first sign of perimenopause is

usually, but not always, a change in the normal pattern of your periods.

Physical Symptoms

Common physical symptoms of menopause/perimenopause include:

- Hot flushes, when you have sudden feelings of hot or cold on your face, neck and chest which can make you dizzy.
- Difficulty sleeping which may be because of the hot flushes and makes you feel tired and irritable during the day.
- Palpitations, when your heart beats suddenly become noticeable.
- Headaches and migraines that are worse than usual.
- Muscle aches and joint pains.
- Changed body shape and weight gain.
- Skin changes including dry itchy skin.
- Reduced sex drive.
- Vaginal dryness and pain, itching or

discomfort during sex.

- Recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs)

Treatment

The main treatment for menopause and perimenopause is hormone replacement therapy (HRT) which replaces the hormones that are at low levels. There are different types and doses of HRT. Using the right dose means your symptoms improve.

Oestrogen comes as skin patches, a gel or spray to use on the skin, implants and tablets. If you have a womb, you also need to take progesterone to protect your womb lining from the effects of oestrogen. Taking oestrogen and progesterone is called combined HRT.

The main benefit of HRT is that it can help relieve most menopausal and perimenopausal symptoms. Hot flushes and night sweats often improve within a few weeks though mood changes and vaginal dryness can take a few months to get better. The risks of HRT are small and usually outweighed by the benefits.

Non-Hormonal treatment

There are non-hormonal treatments if your symptoms are having a big impact on your life, and you cannot or choose not to have HRT. For hot flushes and night sweats there are some medicines that can help which include a blood pressure medicine called clonidine or an epilepsy medicine called gabapentin.

Antidepressants can help with mood symptoms, if you've been diagnosed with depression or anxiety while cognitive behavioural therapy can help with low mood and anxiety and some physical symptoms like hot flushes and joint pain. You will need to talk to your GP to be prescribed any of these alternatives.

Lifestyle changes to help with menopause and perimenopause

Eating well, exercising, and looking after your mental wellbeing can help with menopausal symptoms.

You should:

- ◆ Get plenty of rest, including keeping to regular sleep routines
- ◆ Eat a healthy diet
- ◆ Have calcium rich foods like milk, yoghurt and kale to keep bones healthy
- ◆ Exercise regularly, try including weight bearing activities where your feet and legs support your weight like walking, running or dancing
- ◆ Do relaxing things like yoga, tai chi or meditation
- ◆ Talk to other people going through the same thing, like family, friends or colleagues
- ◆ Talk to a doctor before taking herbal supplements or complementary medicines
- ◆ Stop smoking
- ◆ Limit your drinking to the recommended alcohol limit

You can ease hot flushes by:

- * Wearing light clothing
- * Keeping your bedroom cool at night
- * Taking a cool shower, using a fan or having a cold drink
- * Reducing your stress levels
- * Avoiding or reducing potential triggers such as spicy food, caffeine, hot drinks, smoking and alcohol
- * Exercise regularly
- * Losing weight

You can ease vaginal dryness by using vaginal moisturisers or lubricants which you can buy in our pharmacy. You can talk to our pharmacist in private if you'd like help deciding which moisturiser is right for you. If you are using condoms while having sex do not use an oil-based moisturiser as this can damage the condom.



For more information on this or any other health problem, have a chat with one of our trained team members.

Answers: Q1, It is when your periods stop due to lower hormone levels. Q2, It is when you have symptoms before your periods stop. Q3, Anxiety, mood swings, brain fog, hot flushes and irregular periods. Q4, Usually between the ages of 45 to 55. Q5, Months or years and can change with time. Q6, The main medicine treatment is hormonal replacement treatment (HRT). Q7, It uses oestrogen to replace your body's own levels. Q8, It can relieve most menopause symptoms with hot flushes and night sweats improving within weeks though mood changes and vaginal dryness can take a few months to improve. Q9, There are other things you can take like Clonidine or Gabapentin which can help with hot flushes and night sweats, antidepressants for mood swings and cognitive behavioural therapy for low mood and anxiety. Q10, There are lifestyle changes that can help.