

Menopause for partners



What is the menopause?

Menopause is a biological stage in a woman's life that occurs when she stops menstruating. Menopause is the day when a woman has not had a period for 12 consecutive months (for women reaching menopause naturally). Before this day she is peri-menopausal, after this day she is post-menopausal.

Peri-menopause is the time when most women notice symptoms. This stage can be quite problematic and can involve a range of around 34 varying symptoms.

Post-menopause is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for 12 consecutive months.

There are around 34 different (*and varied*) symptoms – its not just hot flushes!

"I didn't realise was how disruptive, intense and severe some of these symptoms can be. I wasn't expecting bouts of dizziness and nausea requiring me to lie down for an hour at random times of the day. I was expecting to feel a bit tearful, a bit snappy. I wasn't expecting to feel completely out of control of my emotions to the point that antidepressants were the only logical answer. Crying at the simplest comment or imagined slights. I wasn't expecting to bleed three weeks out of four, or to have such excruciating period pain that I couldn't stand straight or be without pain relief. No One Told Me it could be like that. No one warned me that these symptoms might be severe and intense so that I could recognise and work through those times to limit the impact on me, my colleagues, my family, my work. There is a myriad of other relatively minor things that go alongside the more severe symptoms like – forgetfulness, poor concentration, weight gain (it just creeps on and on and on...), forgetting what I wanted to say mid-sentence, aches and pains and general fatigue".

The top six symptoms are; Fatigue, hot flushes, concentration, anxiety, insomnia and recall/memory.

How can you help?

As a partner of an individual going through this, there are symptoms such as sleep disturbance that may affect both of you, leaving you both tired and less than sensitive. However, there are specific things you can do;

- **Symptoms can change** as time progresses; don't expect symptoms to stay the same or improve. New symptoms may appear
- Hormones affect mood and feelings, **sometimes your partner will not be able to control reactions as well as usual** (lack of sleep in addition could be an issue)
- Night sweats can significantly disrupt sleep – which has repercussions for functioning well next day. The disruption from a partner may disturb both of you at night. **Could you sleep in separate beds once or twice a week? Could you have separate duvets** (ie, 2 single duvets on your shared bed) to allow you both a different duvet tog rating; your partner may prefer a much lighter duvet?
- Try to be patient, **there is no end date** and sometimes symptoms can go last a while
- **Offer support for flexible working**; later starts could provide an opportunity to catch up on missed sleep, or have a less busy (or less hot, rushed) commute. Working from home if possible can reduce anxiety about sleep and commuting
- Offer support for rest at the weekend or during time off; this can offer valuable catch up time. Sometimes it may be helpful to avoid planning activities and not committing to social events occasionally can give space to **relax without feeling obliged**

Good resources

British Menopause society [BMS](#)

Dr Louise Newson, Menopause doctor has a website and resources at [menopausedoctor](#)

Health, nutrition [happyhormonesforlife](#)

Reading: Books for hormones and health

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/lts-Not-You-Your-Hormones/dp/1910056537>

https://www.amazon.co.uk/Menopause-concise-manual-Concise-Manuals/dp/1785216422/ref=sr_1_1?crid=17U1X2B1J5W5D&keywords=haynes+manual+m enopause&qid=1578303324&s=books&sprefix=haines+manual+m eno%2Cstripbooks%2C247&sr=1-1