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Menopause overview

Dr Sam Morgan & Dr Harriet Delap

GPs & BMS Accredited Menopause Specialists



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Definitions

Symptoms & use of symptom trackers

Metabolic changes at perimenopause

Blood tests

Contraception

Management - HRT & non-hormonal treatments, supplements, lifestyle

Resources

QI project ideas



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Definitions: Menopause, perimenopause, early menopause, POI, surgical menopause

When? 51 on average

Duration? 4-8 years on average

How will it start? Suddenly, gradually

Cultural differences are important to remember

[BMS Menopause in ethnic minority women](#)





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Most common symptoms of perimenopause

- Cycle change
- Worsening PMS
- Anxiety, low mood, rage, brain fog, low self-esteem
- Fatigue
- Poor sleep
- Night sweats, hot flashes
- Vaginal dryness
- Low libido

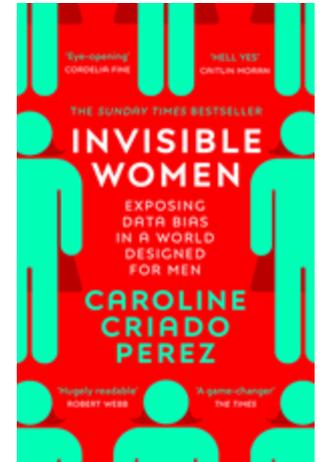
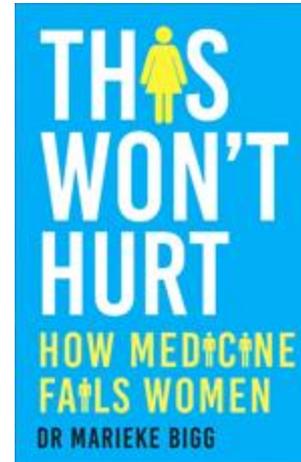




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Symptoms that can catch us out

- Dizziness, palpitations
- Aches and pains
- Central weight gain
- “UTIs and recurrent thrush”
- Prolapse & incontinence
- Headaches
- Bloating, worsening of IBS





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More symptoms

- Dry skin
- Brittle nails
- Dry eyes
- Dry or burning mouth
- Tinnitus
- Pins and needles
- Hair loss



Menopause Symptom Questionnaire

We would be grateful if you could complete and return this form before your consultation. It will help you and the clinician prepare, guide the clinician to the best HRT choices and allow more time for you in your appointment. After the questionnaire, please find a list of resources to help you prepare for your appointment. Thank you.

	Not at all	A little	Quite a bit	A lot/very much
Heartbeat quickening, racing or palpitations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trouble breathing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feeling faint/ dizzy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pressure or tightness in body	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pins and needles anywhere in your body	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tinnitus/ ear ringing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Joint/ muscle pains	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Headaches	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hot flushes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sweating at night	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Difficulty sleeping	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feeling tired/ lacking energy /fatigue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Loss of interest /lack of motivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Difficulty concentrating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Memory problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feeling nervous	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emotional	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anxiety/ panic attacks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feeling low in mood, or depressed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Crying spells	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Easily irritated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced/ loss of sex drive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vaginal dryness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Urinary symptoms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



**Symptom checkers
Apps - Balance, Jennis, Clue**

**Econsults
Accurx & Ardens templates**





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What about on the inside?

Metabolism changes; fat stores increase, inflammation levels rise. This reduces insulin sensitivity and changes glucose and lipid metabolism, increasing cv risk.

When we consider the top 3 causes of death for women
dementia, heart disease and stroke
the significance of these changes becomes clear.

Bone density reduces by up to 20% in 5y after LMP.
Osteoporosis can have significant effects on quality of life.





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Blood tests

NICE - if > age 45 with symptoms blood tests are not needed for diagnosis

Sometimes useful for diagnosis between age 40 and 45

Essential for women aged under 40 ? POI

Sometimes helpful to monitor HRT response

Important for safe testosterone prescribing





Contraception and perimenopause

FSRH guidance to continue until age 55

- IUS from 45 will last, unless for HRT
- IUD from 40 can be used until 55
- Progesterone pills & implants go well with HRT
- Progesterone injection less preferred from 50
- Combined pill, patch & ring not advised from 50





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Holistic menopause management

- ICE
- Information, reliable resources
- Lifestyle
- HRT
- Local HRT
- Non-hormonal treatments





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HRT

Oestrogen – to help symptoms

Progestogen - to protect the endometrium

Testosterone - in addition if needed to support libido

Local oestrogen - alone or in combination with the above, to support genito-urinary symptoms

Oestrogen only

Cyclical/sequential HRT
(oestrogen & progestogen)

Continuous combined HRT
(oestrogen & progestogen)

Bio-identical, body-
identical, synthetic

Local (vaginal) oestrogen



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HRT - some of the known benefits

When started at any age HRT gives good symptom control

When started before age 60 HRT reduces overall mortality

When started before age 60 HRT reduces cardiovascular disease

When started before age 60 HRT prevents & treats osteoporosis

When started before age 55 HRT may reduce risk of Alzheimer's

HRT reduces bowel cancer



Common myths

HRT can't be used

- PH VTE, migraine, high bp, diabetes, thyroid condition, BMI >30
- FH VTE, breast cancer, stroke or heart disease
- for over 5 years

HRT can't be started

- when a woman is still having periods
- over the age of 60

Women's Health Concern infographic

23 cases of breast cancer diagnosed in the UK general population



An additional four cases in women on combined hormone replacement therapy (HRT)



Four fewer cases in women on oestrogen only Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)



An additional four cases in women on combined hormonal contraceptives (the pill)



An additional five cases in women who drink 2 or more units of alcohol per day



Three additional cases in women who are current smokers



An additional 24 cases in women who are overweight or obese (BMI equal or greater than 30)



Seven fewer cases in women who take at least 2½ hours moderate exercise per week



Breast cancer

A woman's lifetime risk is 1 in 8.

Comparison of lifestyle risk factors & HRT, with the difference/1000 women aged 50-59 over next 5 years.

23% breast cancer cases linked to lifestyle

2% breast cancer cases linked to current or past use of HRT



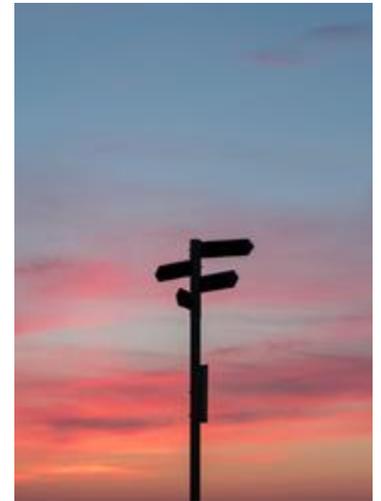
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Oestrogen - oral or transdermal?

Tablets are safe for many women, & usually in stock!

Medical indications for transdermal oestrogen

- age over 60
- migraine
- BMI >30
- higher VTE risk
- higher cardiovascular disease risk
- liver/gallbladder disease
- hypothyroid on thyroxine
- G-I conditions that can affect absorption.





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Transdermal oestrogen - gel, patch & spray

Gel & spray daily, patches twice weekly

Spray great for keen swimmers

Can (unofficially) cut patches on the diagonal

If using higher doses can apply gel/spray bd





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Progestogen options - oral, patches, IUS

Synthetic oral progestogens - good cycle control, increase VTE risk.

Combined HRT tablets & patches.

IUS 5 yearly - good endometrial protection, even with high doses oestrogen.





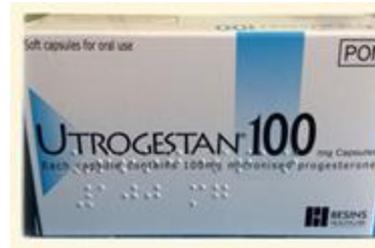
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Body-identical micronized progesterone

Medical indications

- higher breast cancer risk
- higher VTE risk
- PMDD / severe PMS
- progestogenic side-effects
- higher cardiovascular disease risk (lipid neutral)

Utrogestan® not suitable for those with soy or peanut allergy





HRT prescription costs in the UK

HRT prepayment certificate from [NHSBSA](#), £19.30 for the year.

Standard PPC still covers HRT.

Oestrogen, most progestogens (not Provera[®]) and local oestrogen preparations are all covered by the HRT PPC, not testosterone or non-hormonal treatments.

Separate scripts needed..



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Local oestrogen options

Low-dose topical oestrogen - cream, gel, vaginal tablet, and vaginal ring.

Progestogen not needed for endometrial protection.

Daily Rx for 4 weeks if severe symptoms.





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Symptom management for those who can't or don't want to use HRT

SSRIs for vasomotor symptoms

Clonidine (licensed) for vasomotor symptoms – not if bp low

Gabapentin & pregabalin for vasomotor symptoms, sleep and mood too

Oxybutynin for vasomotor symptoms

New non-hormonal drug NK3 antagonist, Fezolinetant coming soon



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Sleep support

- Sleep hygiene – alcohol, caffeine
- CBT-i (insomnia)
- Melatonin? Magnesium?
- Sedative antidepressant
- Specific treatment for sleep disorders like OSA and restless legs

[Menopause and insomnia WHC](#)

Daily Sleep Diary

Complete the diary each morning ("Day 1" will be your first morning). Don't worry too much about giving exact answers, an estimate will do.

Your Name: _____ The date of Day 1: _____

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Enter the Weekday (Mon, Tues, Wed, etc.)							
1 At what time did you go to bed last night?							
2 After settling down, how long did it take you to fall asleep?							
3 After falling asleep, about how many times did you wake up in the night?							
4 After falling asleep, for how long were you awake during the night (waking)?							
5 At what time did you finally wake up?							
6 At what time did you get up?							
7 How long did you spend in bed last night (from first getting in, to finally getting up)?							
8 How would you rate the quality of your sleep last night?							
1 2 3 4 5 V. Poor V. Good							





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Nutrition

- whole food plant based
- right carbs and good fats
- microbiome support with diversity and fibre
- protein for metabolism & bone health
- phyto-oestrogens really help some people
- Vitamin D through Winter months
- minimise alcohol, no smoking

[Nutrition in menopause](#) WHC





Nutrition - supplements, what's the evidence?

- Black cohosh - NICE may help hot flushes, Cochrane insufficient evidence
- Red clover - some evidence for hot flushes, not advised in breast cancer
- St John's Wort - evidence for depression, WHC some evidence hot flushes, not with tamoxifen, interacts with HRT
- Gingko - some short-term effects on memory and cognition
- No evidence - sage, ginseng, evening primrose oil, agnus castus, valerian



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Movement

Cardio, strength, restorative & pelvic floor.

At menopause strength training can

- reduce fat stores & increase muscle mass
- improve blood pressure & immune function
- increase bone strength, joint strength & mobility
- reduce hot flushes, help mood, help sleep.

[Menopause](#) Moving Medicine





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Rest

Stress has a significant impact on symptoms.

In mid-life women are often working, supporting children and parents and running the household.

Symptoms of burnout can be very similar to perimenopause.

“ACEs” can impact perimenopause.

[Emotional wellness in menopause](#) WHC





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Connection

Menopause is a time of change, women sometimes don't recognise themselves.

Support groups e.g. [Mpower](#) at the Greenway Centre can be really helpful.

In some areas group consultations have been used very effectively for women at menopause.





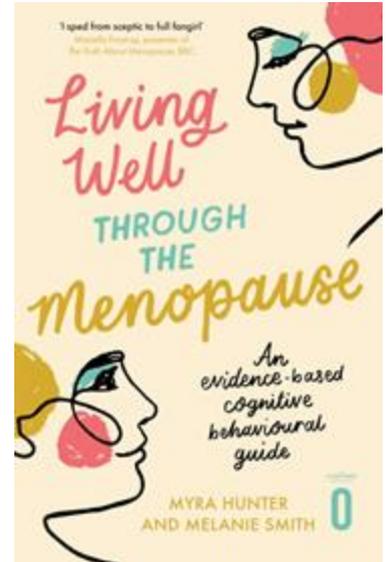
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CBT for menopause symptoms

CBT can help with hot flushes, night sweats, low mood, anxiety and sleep disturbances.

This book is a guide.

There's also a WHC leaflet ["Cognitive Behaviour Therapy for Menopausal symptoms"](#).





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Useful resources - clinicians

[BMS resources](#) & PPMC [toolkit](#)

[PCWHF](#)

[FSRH Contraception for Women over 40](#)

[NICE Menopause: Diagnosis and management \(being updated currently\)](#)

[HRT for generalists](#) RCGP podcast (18 minutes) Toni Hazell & Anne Connolly



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Useful resources - patients

[Women's Health Concern \(BMS\)](#)

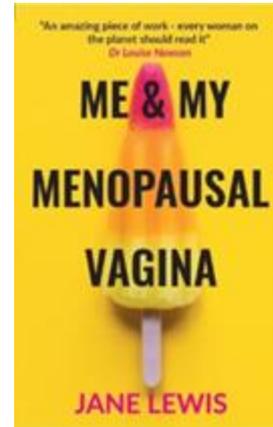
[Rock my menopause \(PCWHF\)](#)

[Daisy Network](#) - POI

[Menopause Fact Sheet](#) - Self care forum

[Yes natural vulval moisturisers and lubricants](#)

[Primary Care Dermatology Society Vulval Care](#)





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Ideas for QI projects - prescribing

Changing from sequential to continuous combined HRT if still on sequential at 54

Offering switch from oral to transdermal oestrogen at age 60

Expired IUS being used for endometrial protection

Offer of local oestrogen in addition to systemic at HRT reviews



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Ideas for QI projects – proactive care

Consider including menopause questions in learning disability checks, cervical screening appointments, NHS health check appointments?

Menopause awareness sessions for your patients and colleagues, posters in the waiting room

Menopause info for patients on your practice website





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Thank
you!



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Any questions?

Please complete this short form to give
some feedback on today's event