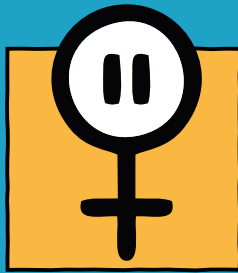


Groundswell

Out of homelessness

Health guide

Understanding menopause



What is the menopause?

The definition of menopause is when your periods stop for 12 months in a row. Your periods stop because of lower hormone levels. This is a completely normal part of ageing for a woman or a person with ovaries. This occurs because your ovaries stop producing eggs.

If any bleeding is experienced after 12 months or more, this is known as post- menopausal bleeding and you should see your GP or healthcare practitioner about this.

Remember, everyone's experience of the menopause is unique.



When does the menopause happen and who does it affect?

The menopause affects women or anyone with ovaries. **It usually happens between the ages of 45 and 55**, but it can happen earlier or later. You can still get pregnant while experiencing menopausal symptoms but after you have not had a period for 12 months in a row, this means you are no longer producing eggs.

If you reach menopause before the age of 45, this is called 'early menopause'. Some people may notice signs of moving towards their menopause from their mid-30s, which is called the 'perimenopause'. It's a good idea to **see the GP if you're experiencing irregular or infrequent periods under the age of 40**.

What are the symptoms of the menopause?

Below are some of the symptoms you may experience because of hormone changes. You may have some and not others, and your symptoms may change over time:

- Periods that are irregular or infrequent
- Low mood
- Memory and concentration problems
- Hot flushes (hot and cold feelings in your upper body)
- Sleeping issues
- Headaches or migraines
- Muscle or joint pains
- Body changes (such as weight gain)
- Lower sex drive/vaginal dryness
- Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs)/passing more urine
- Itchy skin that feels more drier than before
- Hair loss
- Lack of energy.

If you're concerned or just notice differences in yourself, you can go to see a GP to talk about what you are experiencing. They might do a blood test to check your hormone levels, especially if you are under the age of 45.



Everyone has the right to see a GP. You do not need ID or a fixed address to register with a GP and your immigration status does not matter. Always remember your visit to the GP is confidential.

It may be helpful to tell the medical professional if you:

- Are anxious or have experienced any sexual violence or other trauma, which may make the appointment difficult for you.
- Have a physical or mental health condition.
- Have had a bad experience with medical appointments before and you can let them know what they can do to make you feel more comfortable.
- Would like to be seen by a medical professional of a certain gender.

What can I do to help manage my symptoms?

There are some things you can do to manage your symptoms which can make a big difference to how you are feeling. These include:

- Rest and try to go to sleep at the same time if you can. Reducing your caffeine, especially before sleeping, may also help.
- Stay hydrated and eat well when you can.
- Have calcium-rich food like milk and yoghurt to keep bones healthy.
- Activities like walking, running or dancing can help.
- Yoga may help stretch the body and relax your mind. There may be classes in your local services, ask your Support Worker.
- **You are not alone! Talk to others going through the menopause.**
 - Your GP may be able to refer you for some talking therapy or similar.
 - There may be a women's only group in your local service or hostel, ask your Support Worker.
 - Try to find places or people that make you feel safe.
 - Don't be afraid to ask questions and ask for help.
- Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) might be an option for you. You can talk with your GP about the kinds of HRT available to help you make a decision.

Where can I find more information?



NHS:

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

The Menopause Charity:

<https://www.themenopausecharity.org/>

Menopause Café:

<https://www.menopausecafe.net/>

Queermenopause for people who identify as LGBT+:

<https://www.queermenopause.com/>

Daisy Network (for women under 40):

<https://www.daisynetwork.org/>

Manage my menopause:

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

Everyone has the right to good health and to access healthcare. People experiencing homelessness face health inequalities, they are often excluded from information and services. That's why Groundswell produces accessible health guidance for people experiencing homelessness, so they can make informed decisions about their health.

All our health guides are created alongside people with experience of homelessness and reviewed by relevant professionals.



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