

AWARE

**OVERCOMING DEPRESSION.
CHANGING LIVES.**

LET'S TALK ABOUT

**MENTAL HEALTH
& MENOPAUSE**

Menopause affects anyone who has periods and refers to the process of when periods stop due to lower hormone levels. It usually affects women between the ages of 45 and 55, but it can happen earlier.

Changes in your hormones during menopause can impact your mental health, and you may experience symptoms of mood swings, low mood, and anxiety.

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Changes to women's moods, emotions and state of mind during the perimenopause and menopause are extremely common; it is often the primary reason menopausal women first go to see their doctor or nurse.

(The Menopause Charity, 2024)



Look Out for the Signs

8 out of 10 women have additional symptoms alongside their period stopping. The type and severity of symptoms can vary, and there may be some overlap with perimenopausal symptoms.

You may experience symptoms such as:

- **Low mood, feeling unhappy or depressed**
- **Feeling tense or nervous**
- **Memory problems**
- **Panic attacks or anxiety**
- **Loss of confidence**
- **Anger and irritability**
- **Poor concentration (brain fog)**
- **Problems sleeping**
- **Headaches**
- **Aches and pains**
- **Hot flushes – short, sudden bursts of heat that can leave your skin sweaty and red**
- **Night sweats – hot flushes that occur at night**

(The Menopause Charity, 2024 and Mental Health Foundation, 2021)



You may experience an impact on your mental wellbeing due to the hormonal changes happening in your body. However, the emotional impact of managing other menopause symptoms can also affect your mental health. It's important to seek support and speak to your GP about all the symptoms you're experiencing so they can offer the appropriate help and guidance.

What Can Help?

Maintaining a healthy diet, staying active, and caring for your mental wellbeing can help manage symptoms during perimenopause and menopause.

It can also help you keep as well as possible in the future.

How to Take Care of Your Mental Health

The 5 most evidenced based steps to improving your mental health are:



1. Be Active

Our bodies release feel-good hormones when we're active that can also reduce anxiety and stress, and help us sleep better.



2. Take Notice

Savour the moment, be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.



3. Give

Do something nice for a loved one or stranger. Smile, volunteer your time, or consider joining a community group.



4. Connect

With the people around you - family, friends or neighbours. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.



5. Keep Learning

Do not be afraid to try something new. Rediscover an old hobby or interest, or simply set a challenge you will enjoy.

Other self-help strategies include:

(As recommended by the NHS)

Get plenty of rest, including keeping to regular sleep routines.

Eat a healthy diet and try to include calcium-rich food like milk, yoghurt and kale to keep bones healthy.

Do relaxing things like yoga, tai chi or meditation - whatever you love to do to relax, make time for it.



Do One Thing:

Sometimes you may feel overwhelmed when taking steps to help yourself. But remember to focus on doing just one thing at a time.

It will help you reach the goals you set and give you a real sense of achievement.



Additional Support from Your GP

If your symptoms of menopause are severe and impact your day-to-day life, your GP can offer further treatments to help support you.

These may include:

COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY (CBT)

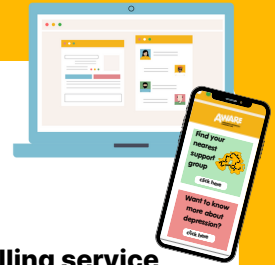
CBT is a talking therapy that can help you manage your problems by changing the way you think and behave. CBT has been shown to be effective in improving emotional and physical symptoms of menopause

HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY (HRT)

This can take the form of tablets, skin patches, gels and implants that relieve menopausal symptoms by replacing oestrogen levels that naturally fall in menopause.

Your GP can refer you to a menopause specialist if your symptoms don't improve after trying treatment or if you're unable to take HRT.

Who to Contact for Support



Lifeline

A telephone help and counselling service for anyone in distress. It is available 24/7 and free to call.

They can give you immediate support, offer face-to-face appointment, or give you information about other services in your area. **Call Lifeline on 0808 808 8000.**

You could also:

- See your GP or call the out-of-hours GP service
- Go to the A&E department
- Call emergency services on 999
- Call Samaritans on their freephone helpline 116 123 - a confidential listening service for those in distress

AWARE NI

You can read our guides for more information on help with depression and looking after your mental health.

Contact us by emailing info@aware-ni.org and visit our website aware-ni.org

Menopause Together

Northern Ireland's Menopause Charity provides additional information and resources.

Visit their website menopausetogether.org

Mater Hospital Belfast

The Menopause service provides expertise for women with problems associated with the menopause & perimenopause.

