

Talking to Your Doctor About Menopause

If you're experiencing symptoms of menopause that are negatively affecting your life, it's a good idea to see a doctor or other healthcare professional for advice and support.

You may feel embarrassed discussing intimate personal details with your doctor - many women feel the same. It is important that you describe and discuss your symptoms so you can both find the best solutions and treatment

When booking an appointment, do ask for a doctor with an interest in women's health and menopause. You may also feel more comfortable requesting to see a female doctor.

This resource is designed to help you prepare for a discussion about menopause and to help you find solutions for the impact it may have on your physical and mental health.

Before you go

- **Start keeping a diary of when you have a period.** Your doctor will use your menstrual patterns to help diagnose menopause.
- **Don't put off going.** Menopause symptoms can persist for a long time, so if you're struggling, don't wait to see if they get better on their own.
- **Make a list of all your symptoms,** how frequently they're happening and how they're affecting you, so your doctor can get a clear picture of how you're feeling.
- **Think about what you would like to happen next.** If you believe HRT is a potential treatment option for you, tell your doctor. They can explain your options and provide support and advice.
- **Additional time** you may find you require two appointments to ensure you discuss your symptoms and treatments options fully

During your appointment

- **Your doctor may ask you about things that might not initially seem relevant**, like your diet, alcohol intake, and stress levels. Lifestyle factors have been shown to affect menopause symptoms, so this information shared is important in determining treatment options.
- **Be honest.** Your doctor will have treated many women going through menopause and won't be shocked at anything you say. Even intimate problems such as vaginal irritation and leaking urine are very common.
- **You are encouraged to participate in discussions and decisions to ensure your treatment addresses your needs.** Your doctor will discuss all the available options, and you have the final say.
- **Discuss complementary or alternative therapies with your doctor**, as they can sometimes interfere with prescribed medicines.
- **Voice your concerns.** If something is worrying you, now is the time to mention it to your doctor – even if you feel it's not directly related to menopause.
- **Tell the doctor about any medications you're taking**, especially hormone treatments like the contraceptive pill, which you might be taking for heavy periods, or hormone blockers used to treat endometriosis or breast cancer.
- **Take your time to consider your options and make a decision.** If you're not sure which solution to opt for, go away and take some time to think about it.
- **Ask for a second opinion if necessary.** If you feel the consultation has not met your needs, you have the right to seek a second opinion from another doctor.

Blood tests are no longer used for diagnosing menopause in women over 45.

What happens next?

- Although you are transitioning through menopause, it is still possible to fall pregnant. Continue using **contraception** until your doctor confirms that it's no longer necessary.
- Consider making **positive lifestyle changes** like stopping smoking, reducing alcohol intake, and improving your diet. Exercise plays an important part in staying healthy after menopause, so start increasing your weekly activity levels.
- Read through any information leaflets from your doctor to understand your **options**.
- If you are starting any treatments, follow your **doctor's instructions** carefully.

If you have Premature Ovarian Insufficiency, or have experienced early menopause due to medical treatments, like chemotherapy or radiotherapy, your doctor may refer you to a specialist for additional support.

Conversation starters

“

I am a woman in my late 40s to early 50s; is menopause something I need to start thinking about? How will I know when it has started?

“

I've been feeling a bit down lately, and irritable with my family. I'm not sleeping very well, either. I think I might be approaching menopause.

“

I've been having hot flushes that are stopping me working and keeping me awake at night. What can I do to get them under control?

“

Sex has become uncomfortable and sometimes painful. A friend told me she experienced the same when she went through menopause. Do you think I could be approaching menopause too?