



EVERYBODY BENEFITS: EMPLOYEE GUIDE

# Taking back control of menopause with lifestyle medicine



# Menopause at a glance

If you're reading this, chances are you're feeling hot, tired, and maybe a bit emotional. You might even be feeling lost for words. Menopause can affect our bodies with irritability and aches, and it can affect our minds, causing difficulty focusing and sometimes anger. You may spend a lot of your day feeling fed up with the way your body is acting and confused from the constant bloating and hunger. Maybe you're feeling impatient. From everything from tingly hands and brittle nails to all-over itchy skin - and possibly a metallic taste in your mouth.

## Welcome to the complex and often surprising world of menopause!

An estimated 13 million women in the UK are currently perimenopausal or menopausal, which accounts for about one-third of the female population, so you're not suffering alone.

Symptoms can vary significantly - some sail through, barely noticing 'the change' while for others the impact is substantial - with debilitating physical and emotional symptoms.

So, take a moment to read this guide and find out how even slight changes to your lifestyle could help you take back control and manage your own personal menopause more effectively.







## Am I menopausal?

Menopause simply marks the point when periods stop, usually between ages 45 and 55, though it can happen earlier or later – the average age in the UK is 51. It's officially diagnosed when you've gone 12 months without a period. The years leading up to it, known as perimenopause, are when hormone changes often trigger symptoms.

## Changing with the change

Menopause is usually a natural and important stage of life, not an illness.

But that doesn't mean it's always easy – up to 80 to 90% will have some symptoms, while 25% describe their symptoms as severe and debilitating.

The physical and emotional changes can feel disruptive, sometimes even overwhelming, and it's common to feel lost and helpless – and even angry about it!

The reassuring truth is that there is a LOT of support out there – and there are many steps you can take yourself to feel healthier, calmer and more confident during this transition.

Alongside medical options such as hormone replacement therapy (HRT), lifestyle medicine gives you practical tools to manage symptoms, protect your wellbeing and set the foundations for long-term health.

# Common symptoms

Not everyone will experience all (or even any) of these symptoms, and for some they may only be mild. But for others, symptoms can interfere with everyday life - which is why support and self-help strategies really matter.

## Physical symptoms

- Brittle or fragile nails: Nails may become weak, break easily and lose hydration due to declining oestrogen levels
- Increased bruising: Skin may become thinner and bruise more easily, with cuts taking longer to heal
- Urinary symptoms: Recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs) can become more common due to weakening of the bladder and pelvic floor muscles
- Irregular or heavy periods (during perimenopause)
- Hair changes: Hair can become more brittle and some women experience thinning or changes to hair on their head, body or eyebrows
- Aches and joint stiffness
- Vaginal dryness
- Heart palpitations: A sensation that your heart is beating unusually fast, hard or irregularly
- Jaw pain (TMJ Dysfunction): Clicking, grinding







## Neurological and cognitive symptoms

- Memory lapses
- Hot flushes or night sweats
- Disrupted sleep
- Mood changes, anxiety or low mood
- Brain fog and difficulty concentrating
- Spatial awareness issues
- Fatigue and reduced energy
- Changes in libido

## More rare, sensory symptoms

- **Formication:** The feeling of insects crawling on your skin
- **Burning mouth syndrome:** A burning or tingling sensation in the mouth, along with changes in taste, such as a bitter or metallic taste
- **Tinnitus:** Ringing or buzzing in the ears
- **Paresthesia:** Sensations of numbness, tingling or 'pins and needles' in the hands and feet

## Impact on daily life

Menopause can affect both personal and professional lives in ways that are sometimes hard to understand - let alone talk about.

At home, broken sleep may leave you exhausted or mood swings may strain relationships.

At work, symptoms like brain fog, anxiety or a sudden hot flush in a meeting can dent confidence and focus.

## Take control with lifestyle medicine

You may not be able to control when or how menopause happens, but you can influence how you feel through the choices you make each day. These aren't restrictive 'rules' but tools to help you feel more in control, more resilient - and hopefully more yourself!

Lifestyle medicine focuses on small, sustainable changes - so how you eat, move, rest, connect and manage stress.







### Nourish your body and mind with nutrition

- **Whole, colourful foods:** Fruits, vegetables, whole grains and nuts provide energy
- **Plant oestrogens:** Foods like soy, chickpeas and flaxseeds may help ease hot flashes
- **Protect your bones:** Calcium and vitamin D are key for long-term strength
- **Stay hydrated:** Water supports energy and reduces the intensity of flushes
- **Know your triggers:** Alcohol, caffeine or spicy foods may worsen symptoms - learn what works for you

### Move more to build strength and energy

- **Gentle cardio:** Walking, swimming or dancing can boost mood and ease symptoms
- **Strength training:** Protects against bone loss and keeps muscles strong
- **Yoga or Pilates:** Improve flexibility, balance and calm
- **Consistency counts:** Regular, enjoyable movement is more powerful than intense, irregular bursts



### Sleep to restore and rebalance

Quality sleep can sometimes feel elusive, but simple habits help:

- Keep a regular bedtime and wake time
- Create a wind-down routine - reading, stretching or journaling
- Keep your bedroom cool and dark to reduce night sweats
- Limit caffeine and screen time in the evening



### Stress and emotional balance

Menopause can sometimes amplify stress or anxiety. Compassion for yourself is just as important as the food you eat

- **Mindfulness and meditation:** Even a few minutes can ease tension
- **Breathing exercises:** Slow breaths help calm hot flushes and nerves
- **Time outdoors:** Nature lifts mood and lowers stress
- **Do what brings joy:** Hobbies, creativity or socialising all nurture resilience



# It's good to talk

Menopause does not have to be a silent struggle - nowadays it's talked about everywhere and by everyone! From TV chat shows, podcasts, TV dramas, school gates and office support groups to trusted friends who are probably a great first SOS call - a safe space where you can open up and be honest about how you feel.

Share your experiences with friends or family - you may be surprised how many can relate to what you're going through.



# Find help at home...

Some menopause podcasts you may find useful – and even funny (yes, funny!) include:

- 1 **The Dr Louise Newson Podcast** for evidence-based advice and expert interviews
- 2 **The Happy Menopause** for nutritionist-led advice on diet and lifestyle
- 3 **Hello Menopause!** for honest conversations and diverse perspectives
- 4 **Hot Flashes & Cool Topics** for community-driven discussions with a collective of women in midlife
- 5 **Real Menopause Talk** for raw personal experiences
- 6 **Menopause Matters, Let's Talk** for comprehensive information and resources

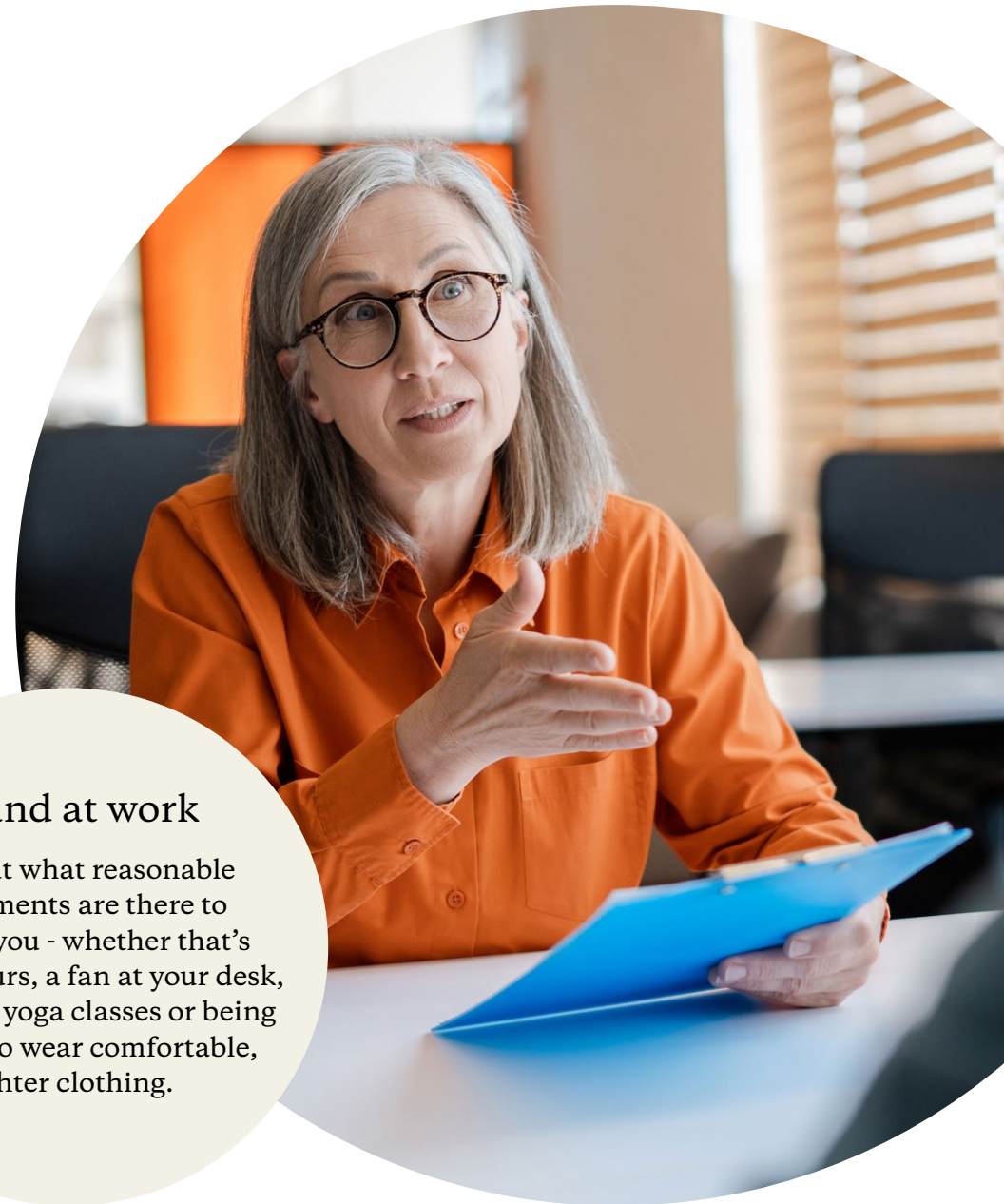
If you prefer to read, try **Menopausal: The Positive Roadmap to Your Second Spring** by Davina McCall. Davina is a great role model about how to tackle mid-life and menopause head on!

The **Menopause Charity** has lots of useful resources and practical tips about how lifestyle medicine can help you deal with menopause symptoms.

[VIST WEBSITE](#)

## ... and at work

Find out what reasonable adjustments are there to support you - whether that's flexible hours, a fan at your desk, subsidised yoga classes or being allowed to wear comfortable, lighter clothing.







## Supporting healthy habits

Menopause is not the end of the old you - it's a new chapter. While it can bring challenges, it also offers an opportunity to reconnect with your health and make choices that empower your future.

By focusing on small, consistent changes in how you eat, move and rest, you can reduce symptoms, protect your wellbeing and feel more confident navigating this transition.

Lifestyle medicine can be a powerful tool to help you thrive through menopause, but sometimes you may need extra help. Speak to a healthcare professional if symptoms are affecting your daily life or mental wellbeing - or if you'd like to explore options like HRT alongside your own DIY lifestyle strategies.

You may also be able to access extra support through employee benefits at work or via the self-pay route. Some providers now offer menopause-specific plans and services - from helplines and virtual GP appointments to blood tests that indicate where you are in the transition. Other employee benefits, such as counselling, dietitian services or physiotherapy, can also provide valuable help during this time.

Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness. Once you move through the menopause transition, that strength - especially if you've embraced lifestyle medicine and maintained healthy habits - can carry you confidently into the next phase of life.



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### **Sources**

BBC

NHS

British Menopause Society

