

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

NAVIGATING MENOPAUSE

*30 Pages covering lifestyle, intimacy,
skincare, and more to help you effortlessly
'transition' and keep living life to the fullest.*

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The Ultimate Guide to Navigating Menopause

30 Pages covering lifestyle, intimacy, skincare, and more to help you effortlessly 'transition' and keep living life to the fullest.

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Understanding Menopause

Menopause is a natural phase in a woman's life, marking the end of her reproductive years. It is characterized by a series of hormonal changes that lead to the cessation of menstrual periods. This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of what menopause is, the science behind it, and the stages involved.

What is Menopause?

Menopause is the term used to describe the period in a woman's life when she undergoes significant hormonal changes. These changes can lead to various symptoms and eventually result in the cessation of monthly periods. From a medical perspective, menopause is defined as the day following 12 consecutive months without a menstrual period.

Stages of Menopause

Perimenopause: This is the phase when hormone levels begin to fluctuate. During this time, a woman may experience various symptoms such as anxiety, low mood, hot flashes, brain fog, and vaginal dryness. Additionally, menstrual periods can become irregular, varying in frequency and intensity.

Menopause: This stage is marked by 12 consecutive months without a menstrual period. It signifies the end of a woman's reproductive years.

Postmenopause: This is the period that follows menopause. It encompasses the rest of a woman's life after she has completed the menopausal transition.

When Does Menopause Happen?

- The average age for a woman in the UK to experience natural menopause is 51. However, it can occur earlier or later for some women.
- **Premature Menopause:** Also known as POI (premature ovarian insufficiency), this condition affects women under the age of 40. The statistics are as follows:
 - 1 in 100 women under 40
 - 1 in 1000 women under 30
 - 1 in 10,000 women under 20
- **Early Menopause:** This refers to the cessation of periods between the ages of 40 and 45.

- **Surgical Menopause:** Occurs when both ovaries are surgically removed.
- **Medical Menopause:** This type of menopause results from medical treatments such as radiotherapy, chemotherapy, or other medical conditions that disrupt ovarian function.

It's crucial for individuals undergoing surgical or medical menopause to receive proper counselling about its effects beforehand. Continuous support, including specialized menopause care, is essential for those in premature, medical, or surgical menopause.

Why Does Menopause Happen?

Menopause occurs due to the ovaries running out of eggs (oocytes). As the egg reserve depletes, associated hormone levels fluctuate and eventually decrease. These fluctuating hormone levels can lead to various symptoms.

Diagnosing Menopause

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommends diagnosing perimenopause based on symptoms alone in healthy women over 45, as blood tests can be unreliable. For women under 45, blood tests might be considered, but if symptoms clearly indicate menopause, they might not be necessary. Women under 40 with symptoms suggesting estrogen deficiency should undergo at least two blood tests, taken about four to six weeks apart, for a clear diagnosis. Further tests and specialist referrals may follow.

Menopause Symptoms Explained

Why Do Menopause Symptoms Happen?

Menopause symptoms arise due to the depletion of eggs in the ovaries, causing the levels of associated hormones, oestrogen and progesterone, to become erratic. Hormone receptors are present throughout a woman's body. As hormone levels fluctuate and decrease, the body must adjust, potentially leading to a combination of physical, psychological, and cognitive symptoms.

Menopause Symptoms	
Physical	Emotional and Cognitive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Difficulty sleeping ● Fatigue ● Headaches/Migraines ● Heart palpitations ● Hot flushes ● Night sweats ● Joint or muscle pain ● Changes to periods ● Vaginal symptoms ● Urinary symptoms ● Loss of libido ● Dry/itchy skin ● Dry eyes/ears ● Brittle nails ● Oral health changes ● Thinning/drying hair ● Weight gain ● Feeling dizzy/faint ● Tinnitus ● Restless legs ● Increased allergies ● Digestive issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Anxiety ● Low mood ● Mood swings ● Irritability ● Increased emotionality ● Lack of motivation ● Loss of joy ● Reduced confidence ● Brain fog ● Poor memory ● Poor concentration

Genitourinary Syndrome of Menopause (GSM)

GSM, commonly known as vaginal atrophy, is a condition that affects the female pelvic area due to declining oestrogen levels. Research indicates that up to 70% of women may experience some genitourinary symptoms during their lifetime.

The vulva and vagina can both be affected by this loss of oestrogen. The vagina may narrow or shorten, and many women report dryness and pain during penetrative sex. The skin of the vulva can become dry and sore, the labia can shrink, and in some cases, the tissues may develop micro-tears or splits.

It's essential to be aware of conditions like lichen sclerosus, a skin condition affecting the vulval tissue. Symptoms can include itching and soreness. It's crucial to seek medical advice rather than self-treating.

Changes in Periods

During perimenopause, menstrual periods may undergo changes. They can become heavier, lighter, longer, shorter, more frequent, or intermittent. Flooding and passing of clots might also occur for the first time. All these patterns are considered normal during perimenopause. However, if the duration or heaviness of bleeding becomes problematic, or there's bleeding between periods or after sex, it's essential to consult a GP. Prolonged heavy bleeding can lead to iron deficiency anaemia, which may require treatment.

Impact on Daily Life

Sleep Disruption: Symptoms like night sweats and anxiety can disrupt sleep, leading to fatigue and irritability during the day.

Relationship Strains: Symptoms like mood swings, loss of libido, and vaginal dryness can strain intimate relationships.

Self-Esteem Issues: Physical changes, such as weight gain, hair thinning, and skin changes, can affect self-image and confidence.

Work Productivity: Cognitive symptoms like brain fog and memory issues, combined with physical symptoms, can impact work performance and concentration.

Possible Long-Term Effects of Menopause

The inclusion of long-term effects here is not to cause alarm. Rather, understanding the long-term effects of menopause allows women to take proactive steps to protect themselves. Regular check-ups, a healthy lifestyle, and staying informed are crucial components of postmenopausal care.

Neurodegenerative Conditions

Menopause can have a profound impact on the brain's health and function. The decline in estrogen levels during and after menopause has been linked to an increased risk of neurodegenerative conditions.

- **Cognitive Decline:** Some women may experience memory lapses or difficulty concentrating during menopause. While these symptoms often improve over time, there's ongoing research into whether menopause increases the risk of conditions like Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia.
- **Mood Disorders:** The hormonal fluctuations during menopause can also affect neurotransmitters in the brain, potentially leading to mood disorders such as depression or anxiety. While these conditions are not neurodegenerative, they can impact brain health and quality of life.
- **Protective Role of Estrogen:** Estrogen is believed to have a protective effect on the brain. It promotes neural growth, modulates neurotransmitter systems, and has anti-inflammatory properties. The decline in estrogen during menopause may reduce these protective effects, potentially increasing the risk of neurodegenerative diseases.

Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is a condition characterized by weakened bones that become more prone to fractures. Menopause is a significant risk factor for osteoporosis due to the decline in estrogen levels.

- **Bone Density Loss:** Women may lose bone density rapidly in the first few years after menopause. Estrogen plays a crucial role in maintaining bone density. When estrogen levels drop during menopause, the rate of bone resorption (breakdown) can surpass the rate of bone formation, leading to decreased bone density.
- **Fracture Risk:** As bone density decreases, the risk of fractures increases. Common fracture sites include the spine, wrist, and hip.

- Prevention and Treatment: It's essential for postmenopausal women to prioritize bone health. This includes consuming a diet rich in calcium and vitamin D, engaging in weight-bearing exercises, avoiding smoking and excessive alcohol, and considering bone density testing. There are also medications available that can help slow bone loss and reduce the risk of fractures.

Dietary Recommendations

Menopause brings about metabolic shifts, reduced bone strength, and a heightened risk of certain diseases. However, a balanced diet can help manage these challenges. Emphasizing fruits, vegetables, whole grains, quality protein, and dairy, while limiting sugars, processed foods, alcohol, caffeine, and spicy foods can ease the menopausal transition.

Research also suggests that specific foods can potentially alleviate certain menopausal symptoms like hot flashes, disrupted sleep, and decreased bone strength. Therefore, the following simple dietary adjustments can help women navigate this crucial phase with greater ease and comfort.

Dairy Products

Menopause leads to a drop in estrogen, heightening the risk of bone fractures for women. Dairy items, including milk, yogurt, and cheese, are rich in nutrients vital for bone health, such as calcium, phosphorus, potassium, magnesium, and vitamins D and K. Research involving around 750 postmenopausal women revealed that those consuming more dairy and animal protein had notably denser bones. Dairy might also enhance sleep quality, with certain studies indicating that amino acids in dairy, like glycine, promote deeper sleep.

Additionally, dairy might lower the chances of experiencing menopause prematurely, before age 45. In fact, a particular study highlighted that women consuming high amounts of vitamin D and calcium had a reduced risk of early menopause.

Beneficial Fats

Omega-3 fatty acids can be advantageous for menopausal women. Some studies suggest that omega-3 supplements can reduce the occurrence and intensity of symptoms like hot flashes and night sweats. Foods rich in omega-3 include fatty fish and specific seeds.

Whole Grains

Packed with nutrients, whole grains offer essential B vitamins and fiber. Diets rich in whole grains can decrease the risk of heart ailments and other health issues. Consuming whole grains can also reduce the risk of early mortality. Examples of whole-grain foods are brown rice, barley, quinoa, and whole-wheat bread.

Fruits and Vegetables

Loaded with essential nutrients, fruits and vegetables are dietary staples. They can help in managing menopausal symptoms. For instance, cruciferous vegetables might be particularly beneficial, with some studies suggesting that they can influence estrogen levels in a way that reduces breast cancer risk.

Foods with Phytoestrogens

These compounds, found in certain foods, mimic the body's estrogen. Foods like soybeans, chickpeas, and certain fruits and teas contain phytoestrogens, which might be beneficial during menopause.

Phytoestrogen food list:

- Tofu
- Tempeh
- Soy milk
- Edamame
- Soybeans
- Flaxseeds
- Sesame seeds
- Chickpeas
- Lentils
- Peas
- Strawberries
- Cranberries
- Raspberries
- Broccoli
- Dried fruits
- Green tea
- Black tea
- Oats
- Barley
- Wheat bran
- Alfalfa sprouts

High-Quality Protein

Menopause can lead to reduced muscle mass and bone strength, making protein intake crucial. Foods rich in protein include eggs, meat, fish, legumes, and dairy.

Foods to Limit: Certain foods might exacerbate menopausal symptoms.

- Added Sugars and Processed Carbs: These can elevate blood sugar levels, potentially intensifying hot flashes.
- Alcohol and Caffeine: Both can trigger hot flashes and disrupt sleep.
- Spicy Foods: Some women find that spicy foods intensify hot flashes.
- High-Salt Foods: Excessive salt can affect bone density and increase blood pressure risks

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Exercise and Menopause

Every woman's menopausal journey is unique. While some may experience mild symptoms that fade quickly, others might face intense hot flashes and mood fluctuations. Fortunately, adopting certain lifestyle habits can assist in navigating these bodily changes.

Significance of Exercise

While consistent exercise might not directly diminish menopausal symptoms, it can enhance overall well-being by alleviating stress. Regular physical activity also combats weight gain and muscle loss, common menopausal concerns. Most healthy women should engage in 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes of intense aerobic activity weekly.

Strength Training

Post-menopause, the risk of osteoporosis rises due to the decline in estrogen, essential for bone formation. Strength training becomes crucial as it boosts bone and muscle strength, accelerates metabolism, and burns fat. You can use dumbbells, resistance bands, or gym equipment. Start with weights that challenge you in 12 reps and progress from there.

Strength training alternatives

The truth is, other forms of exercise won't give you the same pay-off that resistance training does.

Resistance training not only helps boost your metabolism, helping you burn more fat at rest, but it also provides a host of other benefits such as increased insulin sensitivity, reduced risk of metabolic dysfunction, and improved joint health.

But, if you are okay with not having the same degree of health benefits and prefer to do something else, you absolutely can. And you'll still gain plenty of benefits from them. The number one rule is, don't be sedentary. Below is a list of alternatives

Some of these do have crossover with resistance training and will yield some of the same benefits. Ultimately, you have to choose something you can enjoy and sustain for the rest of your life.

Note: For those new to exercise, start with 10-minute light activities, gradually increasing intensity over time.

Cardiovascular Activities

Engaging in aerobic exercises that elevate your heart rate and utilize major muscle groups is beneficial. Options are diverse and include:

- Walking
- Jogging
- Cycling
- Swimming

Yoga and Meditation

Menopausal symptoms vary among women, so personalized relaxation techniques can be beneficial. Techniques like deep breathing, yoga, or meditation can be calming. Certain yoga poses can also help manage symptoms like hot flashes, irritability, and fatigue.

Dance

Exercise can be enjoyable. Dance not only offers a fun cardio session but also enhances muscle flexibility. Explore styles like jazz, ballet, ballroom, or salsa.

Gym Equipment

Elliptical machines and StairMasters are excellent cardio options. As menopause begins, cardiovascular disease risks increase, making heart health paramount.

Zumba

For those who enjoy group workouts, Zumba is a popular choice. It combines Latin-inspired music with dance, providing a fun way to burn calories.

Setting Achievable Goals

To avoid disappointment, set clear, realistic, and attainable goals. Instead of vaguely deciding to "exercise more," specify your intentions, like walking for 30 minutes thrice a week or attending a cycling class. Having a workout partner can also keep you motivated.

Engage Your Creative Side

Physical health is vital, but nurturing your creativity is equally important. Consider taking up painting, knitting, or any other artistic endeavor. Such activities offer a sense of accomplishment and distract from bothersome symptoms.

The Bottom Line

The risk of various health issues, including breast cancer, diabetes, and heart disease, increases during and post-menopause. Regular exercise and a healthy weight can counter these risks. Practical steps, like adjusting the thermostat, wearing light clothing, and having a fan nearby, can also help manage symptoms like hot flashes.

Mental Health and Menopause

Menopause can significantly impact a woman's mental health due to the combination of fluctuating hormone levels, physical symptoms, and the psychological implications of transitioning to this new phase of life.

How menopause can affect mental health

Mood Fluctuations: Many women report increased irritability, mood swings, and feelings of sadness during menopause. The drop in estrogen levels may affect mood by influencing the production and metabolism of serotonin, a neurotransmitter that's linked to mood regulation.

Depression: Some women may experience depressive symptoms or a recurrence of pre-existing depression during menopause. However, it's debated whether this is directly due to hormonal changes or a combination of life factors and menopausal symptoms.

Anxiety: Symptoms of anxiety can become pronounced during menopause. Some women may experience increased worry, nervousness, or feelings of doom.

Cognitive Changes: Some women report memory lapses, difficulty concentrating, or "brain fog" during menopause. While it's still a topic of research, these cognitive changes might be linked to hormonal fluctuations.

Sleep Disturbances: Hot flashes, night sweats, and other physical symptoms can disrupt sleep patterns, leading to insomnia. Chronic sleep deprivation can exacerbate mood disorders and cognitive issues.

Reduced Self-esteem and Body Image Concerns: Changes like weight gain, skin aging, and vaginal dryness can affect self-perception, leading to reduced self-esteem and body image concerns in some women.

Stress: Menopause can coincide with other stressful life events like aging parents, children leaving home, or retirement. The combination can amplify feelings of stress or overwhelm.

Ways to manage mental health during Menopause

Aside from making general lifestyle changes, here are some other targeted strategies you can explore:

Psychotherapy

Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) can be especially useful in helping women cope with the emotional and psychological challenges of menopause.

Alternative Therapies

Acupuncture and hypnosis have been explored as potential treatments for menopausal symptoms, with some women reporting benefits.

Meditation & Mindfulness

Regular meditation can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. It can improve concentration, self-awareness, emotional health, and even enhance tolerance to pain. If this seems overwhelming or you do not know where to start, consider a meditation app such as 'Calm', which provides guided training, sessions and techniques.

Paced Deep Breathing

One of the most recommended breathing techniques to alleviate menopause symptoms, particularly hot flashes and anxiety, is paced deep breathing.

1. **Find a Quiet Place:** Choose a quiet, comfortable place to sit or lie down. This ensures that you can fully focus on your breathing without distractions.
2. **Posture:** Sit with your back straight or lie down flat. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your abdomen.
3. **Inhale Deeply:** Inhale slowly through your nose for a count of four. Ensure that the hand on your abdomen rises higher than the one on your chest, indicating that you're engaging your diaphragm and not just taking shallow chest breaths.
4. **Pause:** Hold your breath for a count of seven.
5. **Exhale:** Exhale slowly and completely through your mouth for a count of eight. Try to exhale longer than you inhale, as this can stimulate the body's relaxation response. As you exhale, the hand on your abdomen should move inward.
6. **Repeat:** Continue this cycle for a few minutes, gradually working up to a 10-minute session.

This technique promotes relaxation and can help regulate the autonomic nervous system. The emphasis on deep, controlled breathing can divert the mind from the sensation of a hot flash or other menopausal symptoms and encourage a state of calm. Consistent practice can lead to long-term benefits, potentially reducing the frequency and severity of hot flashes and helping manage stress and anxiety.

Ideally, practice paced deep breathing twice a day or whenever you feel the onset of menopausal symptoms like a hot flash.

Grounding

Grounding, sometimes known as "earthing," refers to the practice of physically connecting with the earth, often by walking barefoot or lying down on natural surfaces. Beyond this, spending time in natural settings like forests, beaches, or parks can be considered a form of grounding. Nature has a calming effect on the mind. The sounds, sights, and sensations of nature can pull individuals away from daily stressors and into the present moment. However, there is science to back this up. Studies suggest that grounding works by exposing us to the earth's negative ions. Effectively walking barefoot can transfer these negative ions from the earth to the body. Proponents argue that this might neutralize positive ions or free radicals in the body, reducing inflammation and promoting mental and physical health and wellbeing. Some studies have even shown through MRI that grounding triggers positive changes in brain activity.

A Word on Anti-Depressants (or SSRIs)

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) are commonly prescribed to treat depressive disorders, anxiety disorders, and certain menopausal symptoms, particularly hot flashes. However, as with all medications, SSRIs come with potential risks and side effects. When considering SSRIs during menopause, it's essential to be aware of the following potential dangers:

Common side effects of SSRIs include:

- Nausea
- Dry mouth
- Headache
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Sweating (which can be problematic for menopausal women already experiencing hot flashes)
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Weight gain or loss
- Sleep disturbances (insomnia or drowsiness)
- Sexual side effects, such as decreased libido, delayed orgasm, or an inability to orgasm

Long-term risks

Long-term SSRI use has been linked to decreased bone mineral density, exacerbating fracture risks in post-menopausal women already prone to osteoporosis. SSRIs can also interact negatively with various medications, including those for menopausal symptoms, sometimes leading to serotonin syndrome, a severe condition caused by excessive serotonin levels. Abruptly stopping SSRIs can result in "discontinuation syndrome," characterized by mood shifts, dizziness, and other withdrawal-like symptoms. Additionally, SSRIs can heighten bleeding risks, especially when combined with medications like NSAIDs, and in some cases, initiate worsening depressive or anxiety symptoms, including suicidal thoughts. Lastly, weight gain is a potential side effect for some SSRI users, adding concern for menopausal women already facing weight challenges.

Natural Alternatives to Antidepressants

- Exercise - Recent evidence has shown that regular physical activity is as much as 1.5X more effective than anti-depressants.
- Sauna therapy -Saunas may have potential antidepressant effects due to the release of endorphins, reduction in inflammation, and promotion of neurogenesis in the brain. Improved sleep, enhanced circulation, and the relaxation experienced during sauna sessions can also contribute to mood elevation. However, individual experiences vary, and more research is needed to conclusively establish these benefits.
- Omega 3 - Omega-3 supplements, primarily derived from fish oils, have been studied for their potential role in supporting mental health. They may offer antidepressant effects due to their anti-inflammatory properties and influence on neurotransmitter pathways in the brain.
- Vitamin D - This natural 'prohormone' has been linked to mood regulation and mental health, with deficiencies often associated with depressive symptoms. Its potential antidepressant effects may stem from its role in brain function and neurotransmitter synthesis. Supplementing with Vitamin D and getting enough sun exposure (even when it is cloudy) can be effective mood-enhancing strategies.
- Noobru - Our formulas contain numerous natural ingredients shown to lower stress and enhance mood and well-being such as L-theanine and KSM-66 Ashwaganda.

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Natural Remedies

1. **Phytoestrogens:** These are plant compounds that can be consumed through natural food sources or supplements. They may help balance low hormone levels during menopause and alleviate symptoms like hot flashes and night sweats (see list of phytoestrogen-rich foods in the dietary recommendations chapter).
2. **Black Cohosh:** This herb has received quite a bit of scientific attention for its possible effects on hot flashes. It may also help with other symptoms like mood swings and vaginal dryness.
3. **Magnesium:** Many women are deficient in this mineral, which has been shown to reduce hot flashes and improve mood. Menopause could be a good time to start supplementing your intake. [Noobru Lucid may be a good option](#). It contains an ample amount of magnesium, as well as 17 other natural sleep-enhancing plants and herbs to help you get a good night's sleep.
4. **Oily Fish:** A high intake of oily fish such as salmon or sardines seems to delay the onset of menopause by 3.3 years per portion per day.
5. **Lifestyle Changes:** Changes in your lifestyle may help ease the symptoms of menopause. You may feel better if you quit smoking, drink no or less alcohol, exercise regularly, eat a balanced diet with plenty of protein and stay hydrated.
6. **Noobru Advantage and Noobru Shield:** Both contain natural 'anti-stress' (cortisol-lowering) ingredients that can have a 'hormone balancing' effect to help reduce common symptoms. An added benefit of Shield is the 'weight loss' and 'appetite regulation' effect from ingredients like Organic Ginger and Astragalus Membranaceus. Which may help mitigate cravings and weight gain.
7. **Pre and Probiotics:** These may help alleviate menopausal symptoms by influencing estrogen metabolism in the gut, supporting bone and vaginal health, and enhancing mood through the gut-brain connection. Additionally, they can assist in weight management and reduce inflammation.
8. **Evening primrose oil (EPO):** Rich in gamma-linolenic acid, EPO is sometimes used to address menopausal symptoms like hot flashes and breast pain. However, research on its efficacy is mixed.

HRT: Pros & Cons

Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) is a treatment used to alleviate the symptoms of menopause by replacing the declining levels of hormones in the body.

Here are the pros and cons of HRT:

Pros of HRT:

- ✓ **Symptom Relief:** HRT is effective in reducing many of the common symptoms of menopause, including hot flashes, night sweats, mood swings, and vaginal dryness.
- ✓ **Bone Health:** It can reduce the risk of osteoporosis and related fractures.
- ✓ **Vaginal Health:** Helps maintain the lining of the vagina, reducing dryness and discomfort during intercourse.
- ✓ **Potential Cardiovascular Benefits:** If started early in the postmenopausal period, it might offer some cardiovascular benefits.
- ✓ **Mood and Cognitive Function:** This may help in managing mood disturbances and has been researched for its role in cognitive function.

Cons of HRT:

- ✗ **Breast Cancer Risk:** Long-term use, especially of combined estrogen and progestin therapy, can increase the risk of breast cancer.
- ✗ **Cardiovascular Risks:** In older women, especially if HRT is started many years after menopause, there's a potential increased risk of heart disease and stroke.
- ✗ **Blood Clots:** HRT can increase the risk of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolism.
- ✗ **Endometrial Cancer:** Estrogen-only HRT can increase the risk of endometrial cancer in women who have not had a hysterectomy.
- ✗ **Ovarian Cancer:** Some studies suggest a potential increased risk of ovarian cancer with long-term use.
- ✗ **Gallbladder Disease:** There's a slightly increased risk of gallstones and gallbladder disease.

It's essential for women to discuss with their healthcare providers about the potential risks and benefits of HRT, considering individual health history and the severity of menopausal symptoms. According to the NHS, If you're under 60 years old and are not at high risk of breast cancer or blood clots, the benefits of HRT are likely to outweigh the risks. Ultimately, the decision to use HRT should be based on an individualized assessment of the benefits and risks.

If you wish to drink Noobru alongside HRT treatment, we strongly urge you to first consult a medical professional.

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Sexuality and Intimacy

Menopause, a natural life stage for women, brings about a range of physical and mental changes that can impact sexual health and intimacy. Here's a comprehensive guide to understanding and addressing these challenges:

Recognizing Menopausal Impacts on Sexuality:

Direct Effects:

- Vaginal dryness and itching
- Pain during intercourse
- Reduced libido

Indirect Effects:

- Fatigue due to night sweats and sleep disturbances
- Mood fluctuations leading to reduced desire for intimacy
- Decreased body confidence
- Increased susceptibility to urinary tract infections, complicating sexual activity

Addressing Vaginal Dryness

Lubricants: These reduce friction and enhance comfort. Water-based lubricants are ideal since they don't cause irritation or interfere with condoms. Silicone-based options provide longer-lasting lubrication.

Vaginal Moisturizers: Used a few times weekly, these keep the vagina and vulva soft, minimizing itching and discomfort.

Vaginal Oestrogen: A form of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) applied directly into the vagina, it restores local estrogen levels, alleviating dryness and related discomfort.

Safe Practices

Use products specifically designed for intimate use. Avoid perfumed soaps, washes, and non-intimate creams which might increase irritation.

Exploring Different Dimensions of Intimacy

Foreplay: Extended foreplay can enhance natural lubrication and elevate intimacy.

Alternative Intimate Activities: Engage in non-penetrative sexual activities like oral sex or mutual masturbation.

Sex Toys: Consider toys for external stimulation or smaller sizes if penetration is uncomfortable. Toys can also introduce novelty and reinvigorate intimacy.

Communication is Key

- Openly discuss your feelings, physical changes, and desires with your partner.
- If intimacy issues are affecting your relationship, consider couples counselling or consulting a sex therapist.

Boost Your Overall Well-being

Exercise Regularly: Physical activity can elevate mood, self-esteem, and overall vitality. It also promotes better sleep, essential for energy and libido.

HRT: Effective in treating many menopausal symptoms including vaginal dryness, reduced libido, and mood fluctuations. While there are associated risks like a slight increase in breast cancer and blood clot chances, the benefits often outweigh these for many women.

For those wary of systemic HRT, localized vaginal oestrogen can be an alternative. It's crucial to consult a healthcare provider to discuss suitable treatments and weigh the risks and benefits of HRT. Remember, while menopause introduces changes, it doesn't mark the end of a satisfying intimate life. With the right strategies, communication, and care, this period can be navigated gracefully and enjoyably.

Kegel Exercises

Including Kegel exercises in your daily routine can offer both physical and sexual health benefits during menopause and beyond.

Kegel exercises, named after Dr. Arnold Kegel who popularized them, are simple clench-and-release exercises that strengthen the pelvic floor muscles. The pelvic floor muscles support the uterus, bladder, small intestine, and rectum.

How Kegels Can Improve Sexual Satisfaction

Increased Vaginal Tone and Sensation: By strengthening the pelvic floor muscles, Kegels can lead to increased sensation during intercourse. A toned pelvic floor can enhance the feeling of tightness and friction during penetration, which can be pleasurable for both partners.

Stronger Orgasms: The pelvic floor muscles contract during an orgasm. When these muscles are stronger, the contractions can be more intense, leading to potentially stronger and more satisfying orgasms.

Improved Blood Flow: Regularly exercising any muscle group, including the pelvic floor, increases blood flow to that area. Improved blood flow to the genital area can increase arousal and overall sexual sensitivity.

How to Do Kegel Exercises

Identifying the Right Muscles: The first step is to ensure you're working the right muscles. The easiest way to identify them is by trying to stop the flow of urine midstream. The muscles you use for this are your pelvic floor muscles. (Note: Don't make a habit of stopping your urine flow as it can lead to issues. Use this method just for identification purposes.)

Kegel Technique

Once you've identified the right muscles:

- Tighten (contract) your pelvic floor muscles and hold the contraction for five seconds, then relax for five seconds.
- Gradually increase the hold time to 10 seconds with equal relaxation time.
- Aim for at least three sets of 10 repetitions a day.

Consistency is Key: To see benefits, it's essential to do Kegel exercises regularly. Over time, with consistent practice, you should notice improvements in pelvic floor strength and fewer symptoms of weakening.

Consideration: If you're unsure whether you're doing the exercises correctly, or if you don't notice any improvement after consistent practice, consider seeking guidance from a physical therapist specializing in pelvic floor health.

Sleep Strategies

Menopause can often be accompanied by sleep disturbances due to hormonal fluctuations and related symptoms. Thankfully, there are strategies you can employ to help you get a better night's sleep during this transitional phase.

Optimize Your Sleep Environment

Temperature: Hot flashes can disturb your sleep. Keep your bedroom cool with fans or an open window. Consider moisture-wicking bedding and pyjamas to combat night sweats.

Darkness: Ensure your room is dark or use a sleep mask. This promotes the production of melatonin, a sleep hormone.

Noise: Use earplugs or white noise machines to block out disturbances.

Establish a Routine

Consistency: Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends.

Wind Down: Incorporate a calming pre-sleep ritual such as reading, gentle stretching, or meditation.

For Ease, Follow the 10-3-2-1-0 Rule

The 10-3-2-1-0 rule is a sleep hygiene guideline that helps to create a consistent and healthy sleep schedule. The rule consists of the following five elements:

10 hours before bedtime, avoid caffeine

3 hours before bedtime, consume only water

2 hours before bedtime, stop eating

1 hour before bedtime, no screens

0 is the number of times you will hit the snooze button on your alarm

Limit Caffeine, Alcohol & Nicotine

Limit or eliminate intake, especially in the evening. Both can interfere with the sleep cycle. Besides its other health risks, nicotine is a stimulant and can keep you awake.

Exercise Regularly

Physical activity can improve sleep quality and relieve menopause symptoms. However, avoid vigorous exercise close to bedtime as it may have the opposite effect. Ideally, morning exercise is the most optimal time to set you up for a night of good sleep.

Manage Stress

Techniques like deep breathing exercises, meditation, grounding, and yoga can help in relaxing the mind and body.

Review Medications

Some medications can disrupt sleep. If you suspect a medication is affecting your sleep, consult with your healthcare provider about alternatives.

Consider Natural Supplements:

Some women find relief with supplements like valerian root, Magnesium, or chamomile. [Noobru Lucid contains the above, alongside 15 other clinically proven sleep enhancers, making it a powerful natural sleep aid.](#)

Limit Naps

If you need to nap during the day, keep it short (20-30 minutes) and avoid napping late in the afternoon.

Avoid these 'stimulating' foods

Certain foods should be avoided as these can over-spike insulin or stimulate the nervous system:

- Sugar (small amounts of fruit and honey are fine)
- Spices
- Monosodium Glutamate (MSG)
- Dark chocolate (contains caffeine)

Eat a Carb-Rich Dinner

Carbohydrates can aid in sleep promotion by increasing the brain's uptake of tryptophan, an amino acid that serves as a precursor to the sleep-regulating hormone melatonin. When carbs are consumed, insulin helps clear competing amino acids from the bloodstream, allowing more tryptophan to enter the brain. Additionally, maintaining adequate glycogen stores, derived from carbohydrates, is essential for sustaining restorative sleep stages. Opting for complex carbohydrates, such as whole grains, helps ensure stable blood sugar levels overnight, preventing sleep disruptions. It's beneficial to choose whole grains over refined carbs, as the latter might lead to blood sugar fluctuations that disrupt sleep.

Importance of Morning Sun Exposure

Regularly exposing yourself to morning sunlight helps regulate the body's natural sleep-wake cycle, also known as the circadian rhythm. The light-sensitive cells in the eye detect sunlight during the day and send signals to the brain to suppress the production of the sleep hormone melatonin and promote alertness. At night, when there is less sunlight, the brain increases the production of melatonin, which helps promote sleep.

Limit artificial screens in the evening

Artificial light emitted from cellphones, laptops, televisions and even household lights is known as blue light.

Exposing yourself to these during the day is fine. However, continuing to sit on your phone or behind a screen will suppress melatonin production.

Therefore, it is important that you limit the amount of artificial light once the sun goes down. If you need to work late, you can download a blue light filter for your phone or laptop.

Skin & Beauty

The hormonal alterations during menopause can significantly impact the skin's health and appearance. Our skin mirrors these internal shifts.. However, with knowledge and the right products, one can gracefully navigate this phase, maintaining healthy and glowing skin.

Effects of Menopause on Skin

As estrogen levels dip during menopause, various skin conditions can emerge:

- ✗ Reduced collagen synthesis, leading to more noticeable fine lines and wrinkles.
- ✗ Skin becoming thinner and laxer.
- ✗ Enhanced skin dryness.
- ✗ Growth of facial hair.
- ✗ Acne flare-ups.
- ✗ Development of sunspots.

Research indicates that, post-menopause, women may experience a rapid reduction in collagen and experience more profound facial aging than men. Moreover, insufficient sleep, common during menopause, exacerbates dark circles and can increase skin dehydration. Strategies for Menopausal Skin Care Aging is an inevitable process, and while it's impossible to reverse it entirely, several tactics can help maintain the skin's health and vibrancy:

- **Addressing Fine Lines:** Introduce peptides to your regimen. They boost collagen production, vital for maintaining skin elasticity. Retinol, backed by studies, is also effective in diminishing fine lines. Lastly, daily sunscreen application is essential, as it offers protection against further skin damage and wrinkle formation.
- **Combating Dryness:** As moisture retention in the skin declines with age, incorporate products that contain hyaluronic acid, glycerin, and ceramides. These components hydrate the skin and maintain its moisture balance.
- **Managing Facial Hair:** Before opting for treatments like laser hair removal or topical creams, it's advisable to consult with a dermatologist to eliminate underlying causes like thyroid issues.

- **Handling Breakouts:** Menopausal acne can be tackled using cleansers with salicylic or glycolic acid. However, if your skin tends to be on the drier side, consider a milder cleanser. Furthermore, retinol, while beneficial for many, may increase UV sensitivity, hence the importance of sunscreen.
- **Tackling Discoloration:** Hormonal shifts and prolonged sun exposure can cause pigmentation. Vitamin C-rich topical antioxidants can counteract this by neutralizing free radicals and lightening dark spots.

A Simple Daily Skin Care Routine

1. Cleansing

Opt for gentle, moisturizing cleansers during menopause to prevent further drying of the skin.

2. Serums

Serums can directly address the unique skin challenges of menopause. It's beneficial to choose ones that tackle multiple issues, like a vitamin C serum with hydrating components like glycerin. Some recommended ingredients for menopausal skin are vitamin C, retinol, ceramides, linoleic acid, and peptides. However, it's essential to ensure that these active ingredients align with individual skin needs and tolerances.

3. Moisturizer

Use a moisturizer both morning and night. It helps seal in the benefits of serums while providing extra hydration. In the morning, always pair it with sunscreen to protect against aging effects from sun exposure.

4. Eye Care

The skin around the eyes, being delicate, often shows aging signs first. Tackle issues like dark circles, puffiness, and crow's feet with eye creams that address your specific needs. Ingredients like squalane and glycerin help with hydration, caffeine reduces puffiness, retinol combats wrinkles, and vitamin C brightens.

5. Facial Massage

Skincare experts vouch for the benefits of facial massages, both for beauty and overall wellness. Consider Gua sha, a traditional Chinese technique using a specific tool for facial strokes. This method has gained traction for its apparent ability to contour, lift, and reduce facial puffiness. Moreover, it's believed to stimulate collagen production. While hands can be effective, using specialized tools can enhance the experience.

Key Considerations

- Individualize your skin care. What's effective for one person may not work for another, particularly considering the varying skin types.
- Always test a new product on a small skin patch to ensure no adverse reactions.
- While prevention is vital for all skin tones, those with darker complexions may experience aging signs later due to higher melanin content.
- Stay informed. Always consult a dermatologist when uncertain about a product or procedure's side effects.

Boost Collagen Levels

Collagen is the most abundant protein in the human body, playing a critical role in the structure of our skin, hair, nails, joints, and tendons. As we age, our body's natural collagen production decreases. While the body can't absorb collagen directly from dietary sources, certain foods can help stimulate the body's production of collagen or provide the essential amino acids that are precursors to collagen synthesis.

Collagen-promoting foods include:

Bone Broth: Made by simmering the bones and connective tissue of animals, this broth is often considered one of the top sources of collagen.

Fish: Especially the skin of fish, which is rich in collagen.

Chicken: Particularly chicken skin and cartilage, which are used in many commercial collagen products.

Egg Whites: They contain proline, one of the amino acids necessary for collagen production.

Citrus Fruits: Oranges, grapefruits, lemons, and limes are high in vitamin C, which is necessary for collagen synthesis.

Berries: Such as strawberries, raspberries, and blueberries, are also high in vitamin C.

Garlic: Provides sulfur, which is a necessary component for collagen production.

Leafy Greens: Spinach, kale, and Swiss chard are rich in chlorophyll, which has been shown to increase the precursor to collagen in the skin.

Beans: Provide amino acids, which are the building blocks of collagen.

Cashews: Contain zinc and copper, both of which boost the body's ability to create collagen.

Bone-containing cuts of meat: Like ribs or T-bones, can provide the amino acids needed for collagen production.

Oysters: High in zinc and copper, minerals essential for collagen production.