

Why can menopause cause depression?

The menopause is a particularly vulnerable time for women because they are experiencing hormonal changes. It can take your body time to get used to the declining levels of oestrogen and progesterone as you go through this stage of your life.

This may cause a whole variety of menopausal symptoms, including low mood, mood swings or even depression. Once the body has adapted to the hormone shift, many women find their depression lifting.

Aside from hormonal changes, menopausal women may experience other factors which can affect their mood such as children leaving home, family loss and grief (both parents or grandparents), or medical conditions such as thyroid dysfunction. It is important to understand what has triggered your low mood or depression to be able to find the most effective treatment for you.

What treatments are there for depression?

Depression is a medical condition which needs to be diagnosed and treated by a doctor. It is important to discuss all of your symptoms, including times that you are particularly prone to feeling down, suicidal thoughts and any personal or family history of depression. Your doctor may refer you to a psychiatrist, psychologist or counsellor.

There is a wide range of drugs and anti-depressants available to treat menopausal depression. Many of these have side-effects and some are more effective for some people than others. You will need to spend time with your doctor to find a treatment suitable for you.

There is also a range of therapies which have proven effects in improving depression. Such therapies include cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) which works to alter your thinking to help you see things in a more positive light.

If your doctor decides that you are not suffering from depression, [but from anxiety](#), stress or mood swings, the symptoms of which are often confused, then there is a range of treatments, including herbal remedies, available.

Anxiety in Menopause

Anxiety is a common side effect of menopause; it is characterised by a persistent feeling of worry and anxiousness. People who have anxiety tend to get very worked up and concerned about events or situations, which other people find completely normal and stress-free. Even if you realise that the things you are anxious about are not worth worrying about, it can still be very difficult to get rid of the feelings of anxiousness.

The effects of anxiety

Anxiety can affect your mood, your relationship with others, your sleep quality and your general wellbeing. If you suffer from prolonged episodes of anxiety or it affects your day to day life, you should consider seeking **advice from your GP**.

One of the main effects of anxiety is disturbed sleep patterns and many women already find it difficult to sleep properly during menopause as a result of other symptoms including night sweats and hot flushes. After a couple of days of disturbed sleep you may feel irritable and tired, but if poor sleep quality continues, the effects can be much more severe. Sleep deprivation can heighten anxiety and also contribute to poor health, increased susceptibility to illness, mood swings and low energy levels.

Why does menopause cause anxiety?

Menopause may lead to an increased risk of anxiety because oestrogen levels fall; oestrogen plays an important role in balancing chemicals in the body and a reduced level may lead to low mood. The changes you go through during menopause can also make you anxious, as you have to deal with symptoms you're not used to and you may worry about your health, the process of ageing and how you feel once you've reached menopause.

Coping with anxiety

Home remedies for anxiety include:

- exercise
- relaxation techniques and breathing exercises
- meditation
- yoga
- reducing your caffeine intake
- eating a healthy diet

If self-help techniques are not effective, you shouldn't hesitate to ask your G P for advice; possible treatment options for anxiety include medication, counselling and talking therapies, such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and sedatives to help you sleep.

Ways to cope with anxiety

1. Reframe unhelpful thoughts

The way we think, feel and behave are linked. Sometimes we develop patterns of thoughts or behaviours that are unhelpful so recognising them, and taking steps to think about things differently, can improve your mental health and wellbeing.

If we take time to be aware of ourselves and be in the present moment, noticing our own thoughts and feelings, and the world around us, we can gain a better perspective. Sometimes this is known as being more mindful. Mindfulness and meditation can help you be in the present

2. Get good sleep

Good-quality sleep makes a big difference to how we feel mentally and physically, so it's important to get enough.

3. Connect with others

Spending quality time with friends or family, talking to someone about how we are feeling or finding ways to help other people can all help stop you from feeling lonely and improve your mental health and wellbeing. This can be online, by phone or seeing someone in person.

4 Live a healthy life

Being active, enjoying the outdoors and having a healthy, balanced diet all impact how we feel. Also, stopping bad habits like smoking, and cutting down on alcohol and caffeine can have a positive effect on our mood.