

# STAYING HEALTHY DURING MENOPAUSE



## What happens during the menopause?

During menopause, the levels of oestrogen and progesterone hormones in the body dip. It is this dip in oestrogen, specifically, that leads to symptoms such as difficulty sleeping, brain fog, or changes in mood as well as irregular periods, hot flushes and night sweats, to name a few.

## How does HRT work?

HRT, or hormone replacement therapy, is the most commonly prescribed treatment to relieve the symptoms of menopause. It works by increasing oestrogen levels in the body. Having similar levels of oestrogen to those before menopause help to reduce the symptoms that you may be experiencing.

## What about the different types of HRT?

The main types of HRT that you may be prescribed are combined HRT, which contains both oestrogen and progesterone, or oestrogen-only HRT. Oestrogen-only HRT can be harmful to the lining of the womb, which is why women with a womb are normally offered combined HRT as it provides protection for the womb lining. Oestrogen-only HRT is usually only offered to women who have had their womb removed.

HRT medication is available as oral tablets, skin patches, gels that are rubbed into the skin, implants, and vaginal creams or pessaries.



### Healthy diet

The fall in oestrogen levels in the body that happens during menopause can increase the risk of heart disease and osteoporosis (a condition where bones weaken, meaning they could break or fracture more easily). A diet that is low in saturated fat and salt, and high in calcium, magnesium and vitamins K and D can help to balance this increased risk.



### Regular exercise

Changes in mood, as well as experiencing anxiety and other symptoms that affect emotions are common during menopause. Regular exercise (typically around 150 minutes per week) may help to manage these symptoms as it has been shown to boost mood. Regular exercise is also important for heart and bone health.



### Use relaxation techniques

Mindfulness practices that help you to relax, such as breathing exercises, yoga or meditation may help to ease some of the symptoms of menopause.



### Stop smoking

It is a good idea to try to stop smoking as soon as you can as the intensity of menopausal symptoms tend to be higher for those who smoke.



### Drink sensibly

Alcohol increases hot flushes and increases the risk of breast cancer. Try not to drink more than 2-3 units of alcohol a day and keep at least one day a week alcohol-free.

# HRT Journey Diary



Menopause can be a challenging time with changes in hormones causing a number of symptoms, which are often different for each woman. Responses to HRT treatments can also vary.

Which is why this simple tracker may help you to record your response to HRT treatment for the first 6 months. It is designed to help you to monitor the extent to which symptoms affect you and to support you in discussions with your GP about your experience with HRT. Write down as much detail as you can, ready for discussion with your doctor at your regular appointments

**Please indicate the extent to which you are bothered by any of these symptoms at different stages of your treatment:**

**SCORING: 0 = Not at all ; 1 = A little ; 2 = Quite a bit ; 3 = Extremely**

	Score before starting HRT Date: ...../...../.....	3 months after starting HRT Date: ...../...../.....	6 months after starting HRT Date: ...../...../.....
Heart beating quickly or strongly			
Feeling tense or nervous			
Difficulty in sleeping			
Attacks of anxiety, panic			
Difficulty in concentrating			
Feeling tired or lacking in energy			
Loss of interest in most things			
Feeling unhappy or depressed			
Crying spells			
Irritability			
Feeling dizzy or faint			
Headaches			
Muscle and joint pains			
Hot flushes			
Sweating at night			
Loss of interest in sex			
Vaginal dryness			
Urinary symptoms			

**Make sure you speak to your GP regularly about how you are feeling. Your symptoms may be a sign that a change to your treatment is needed.**