

MENOPAUSE AWARENESS

factsheet



Menopause Awareness

- According to research, one in four menopausal people considers leaving their jobs because of their symptoms
- It is still a largely taboo topic despite the fact that 50% of the population will inevitably go through menopause
- Menopause is unavoidable and affects every person born with a womb, although symptoms and time spent in each 'phase' can vary widely
- There are three phases:
 - Perimenopause - the time running up to the last period
 - Menopause - when the last period has happened
 - Post menopause - a year after the last period and beyond
- Perimenopause typically begins around the 39 to mid-fifties but can start earlier and lasts on average between 4 months and 5 years
- Perimenopause can be triggered early through:
 - Family history of early menopause
 - Specific treatments/medical issues, e.g. cancer, mastectomy, hysterectomy
 - Drugs relating to gender transition
- Early perimenopause is diagnosed through a blood test available from the doctor. However, if you are 45 or older, it will be assumed that you're perimenopausal, and a blood test will not be offered
- There are many treatment options, but doing one's own research is critical, as not all doctors and medical professionals are trained or up to date on menopause treatments - Visit <https://www.newsonhealth.co.uk> for more information
- If unhappy with medical advice, always seek a second opinion

MENOPAUSE SYMPTOMS

Physical

- Difficulty sleeping
- Headaches
- Hot flushes/night sweats
- Dry hair, skin and nails
- Joint stiffness, aches and pains
- Reduced muscle mass
- Urinary tract infections (UTIs)
- Weight gain
- Unpredictable and excessive bleeding

Non-Physical

- Brain fog
- Low mood
- Depression
- Inability to concentrate
- Anxiety
- Poor memory
- Loss of confidence
- Lack of motivation/fatigue
- Mood swings
- Inability to regulate emotions

(*These are just a few of the many symptoms and is not an exhaustive list!)

EFFECTS OF LOWER ESTROGEN

Estrogen is the main hormone involved in menopause. It's the lowering of estrogen that causes symptoms. N.B. Not everyone has symptoms!

1. Neurotransmitter Regulation:

- Serotonin: Estrogen enhances serotonin helping to regulate mood, anxiety, and emotional balance. With lower estrogen, serotonin production decreases, often leading to increased mood swings, anxiety, and even depression.
- Dopamine: Estrogen also influences dopamine, a neurotransmitter tied to reward, motivation, and cognition. Lower estrogen levels can reduce dopamine function, contributing to decreased motivation, slower cognitive processing, and an increased risk of mood disorders.
- Acetylcholine: This neurotransmitter, which plays a critical role in memory and learning, is supported by estrogen. Declining estrogen reduces acetylcholine production, impairing memory function and making women more susceptible to memory issues and cognitive decline.

EFFECTS OF LOWER ESTROGEN

2. Neurogenesis and Cognitive Function

Estrogen plays a key role in neurogenesis, especially in the hippocampus, which is central to learning and memory. Estrogen helps maintain hippocampal volume and supports synaptic plasticity, allowing the brain to form and reorganize connections between neurons. When estrogen levels drop, hippocampal neurogenesis declines, contributing to memory impairment, "brain fog," and slower information processing.

3. Protection Against Neurodegeneration

Estrogen has neuroprotective effects, partly due to its antioxidant properties that help reduce oxidative stress, which is implicated in aging and neurodegeneration. Estrogen protects neurons from inflammatory damage and apoptosis (cell death), reducing the risk of Alzheimer's and other neurodegenerative diseases. Without this protection, the brain becomes more susceptible to age-related damage, increasing the risk of cognitive decline.

4. Impact on White and Gray Matter Volume

Estrogen helps maintain white matter (which facilitates communication between brain regions) and gray matter (which processes information). With lower estrogen, there is a reduction in gray matter in areas like the hippocampus and prefrontal cortex, affecting memory, executive function, and emotional regulation.

5. Blood Flow and Glucose Metabolism

Estrogen regulates blood flow and glucose metabolism in the brain, providing energy essential for cognitive functioning. When estrogen declines, the brain's energy metabolism can be disrupted, often leading to cognitive symptoms like confusion or memory lapses. This energy deficit also affects attention, processing speed, and overall mental stamina.

EFFECTS OF LOWER ESTROGEN

6. Stress Response and Cortisol Regulation

Estrogen modulates the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, which is responsible for managing the body's response to stress and producing cortisol. Lower estrogen can dysregulate cortisol production, making stress responses more pronounced and prolonged. Increased cortisol can, in turn, exacerbate anxiety, sleep disturbances, and mood issues.

Summary

The lowering of estrogen during menopause leads to a host of neurological and cognitive changes, largely due to its role in neurotransmitter regulation, neuroprotection, energy metabolism, and structural support for the brain.

This decline can thus increase vulnerability to mood disorders, cognitive impairment, and neurodegenerative diseases, underscoring the critical role of estrogen in maintaining brain health and resilience in women.

MEN'S AWARENESS (ANDROPAUSE)

Decline in Testosterone

- Andropause typically begins in a man's 40s or 50's.
- Usually, a slower decline than we see in women's estrogen - 1% per year after the age of 30.
- However, it can be quicker in some men, which can cause significant physical and mental health issues.

Typical Symptoms

- Changes in mood
- Mood swings
- Anxiety/depression
- Stress symptoms
- Suicidal ideation
- Inability to regulate emotions
- Fatigue/listlessness
- Difficulty sleeping
- Issues with reproductive organs
- Reduced bone mass
- Reduced muscle mass
- Increased body fat
- Hair loss

Diagnosis

- Low testosterone is diagnosed through a blood test but is not easily available on the NHS; waitlists for treatment are long.
- Private options are available
- UK blood tests: <https://www.medichecks.com/products/testosterone-blood-test>
- Medically Supervised Testosterone Replacement Therapy for Men: <https://alphagenix.co.uk/>

EFFECTS OF LOWER TESTOSTERONE

The decline of testosterone affects the brain in several mechanical and biochemical ways, largely through its interactions with neurotransmitters, brain structures, and neurogenesis. Here's how these mechanisms work:

1. Neurotransmitter Modulation

- **Dopamine:** Testosterone positively influences dopamine, a neurotransmitter tied to reward, pleasure, and motivation. Lower testosterone can lead to decreased dopamine production, potentially resulting in apathy, reduced motivation, and an increased risk of depression.
- **Serotonin:** It also affects serotonin levels, which regulate mood, emotional balance, and anxiety. Lower testosterone may cause serotonin imbalances, leading to increased anxiety or depression.

2. Amygdala Activity and Emotional Regulation

- Testosterone influences the amygdala, a region critical for emotional processing and the stress response. High testosterone levels are associated with increased amygdala activity, which may enhance emotional resilience. A decline in testosterone can reduce this resilience, leading to heightened stress sensitivity, mood swings, or even irritability.

3. Hippocampal Function and Memory

- Testosterone affects the hippocampus, the brain's memory and learning center, where neurogenesis occurs (i.e., the formation of new neurons). Testosterone supports neurogenesis, aiding in memory formation and cognitive flexibility. Lower testosterone can impair this function, leading to issues like "brain fog" and difficulties in forming and retaining memories.

EFFECTS OF LOWER TESTOSTERONE

4. Neuroplasticity and Neuroprotection

- Testosterone has neuroprotective properties, promoting the health of neurons and encouraging neuroplasticity, which is the brain's ability to adapt and reorganise itself. Lower levels of testosterone reduce this neuroprotective effect, potentially making the brain more vulnerable to age-related degeneration or even increasing the risk of neurodegenerative diseases.

5. Cortisol and Stress Response

- Testosterone and cortisol, the stress hormone, have an inverse relationship. Higher testosterone helps buffer cortisol levels, keeping stress responses in check. When testosterone levels drop, cortisol may increase more readily, leading to prolonged stress responses, which can exacerbate anxiety, sleep issues, and emotional dysregulation.

6. Effect on White and Grey Matter Volume

- Studies have shown that testosterone levels correlate with the density and volume of white and grey matter in the brain. Lower testosterone can decrease both types of brain matter, which could contribute to slower cognitive processing, reduced executive function, and other cognitive declines.

Summary

Together, these mechanisms show how testosterone influences not only mood and energy levels associated with mental well-being but also brain health through its effects on neurogenesis, neurotransmitter production, stress responses, and overall brain structure. This is why testosterone decline during andropause can have far-reaching effects on both cognitive and emotional health in men.

AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

- Our subconscious mind continually scans new environments, people, situations or plans for potential threats.
- The subconscious can't tell us in words if something is wrong. Instead, it sends messages to our autonomic nervous system (ANS) to run, fight, freeze or fawn.
- Our ANS is an in-built safety mechanism. It can process thousands of pieces of information in seconds.
- When our stress response gets triggered, the pre-frontal cortex (the part of the brain responsible for critical thinking) shuts down, making it difficult to process information necessary to make sound decisions.
- Instead, the amygdala, which is responsible for spontaneous action, kicks in, prompting us to run, fight, or freeze.
- However, today, the stress response does not typically look like running, fighting or being frozen to the spot. Instead, it looks like...

Fight



- **DEFENSIVENESS**
- Hostility
- Judgemental
- Passive-aggressive
- Belligerence
- Micromanaging
- Anger/aggression
- Arumentative
- Frustration
- Nitpicking/snappy
- Resentful
- Sarcasm

Flight



- **SUDDEN URGE TO GET AWAY**
- Avoidance
- Lateness
- Cancelling plans/meetings
- Physically removing yourself
- Sickness/absence
- Excessive running/ cycling/ walking

Freeze



- **PROCRASTINATION**
- Physically hiding (car, kitchen, restroom, etc.)
- Numbing (Netflix bingeing, social media scrolling)
- Feeling stuck
- Lack of motivation
- Immobility
- Self-Pity

Fawn



- **PEOPLE PLEASING**
- Trouble boundary setting
- Put others first
- Can't say 'no'
- Fear speaking up
- Deferring to others
- Fear of speaking up
- Fear of standing up for oneself

FIGHT, FLIGHT, FREEZE, FAWN

- Our brain was designed to keep us alive long enough to procreate. That's its sole purpose.
- It wasn't designed for happiness but survival!
- To that end, your brain loves certainty, even if that 'certainty' is potentially painful or harmful, e.g. staying in a job you hate or a bad relationship.
- Your brain will always gravitate toward what is known, even if, on a conscious level, the 'new' thing makes far more sense.
- Even when you know the 'new' thing is far better for you, self-sabotage happens when your brain tries to pull you back to what it knows.
- Once we're conscious of how our brain works, it can make a CONSCIOUS decision to override our innate programming.

Imposter Syndrome

- Any new job, new business, side-hustle, public speaking, networking, new project, dating, etc., can trigger your stress response.
- Even though you have the skills, knowledge and experience to do the 'thing', your ANS may still consider it a threat and try to lead you away.
- Remember that your pre-frontal cortex may be impaired, so you will likely lose the ability to think critically.
- Your brain may even come up with wild reasons to stop you that make no critical sense.

Self-sabotage

- Again, you attempt to do something new outside your comfort zone.
- It may start well; however, when it becomes difficult, you may start to sabotage yourself.
- You stop doing all the things you need to do to create a satisfactory result.
- Your subconscious mind has perceived a threat and employed your ANS to stop you, triggering your flight, fight, freeze stress response.

MANAGING STRESS SYMPTOMS

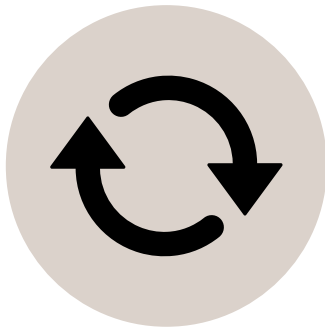
Physiological Sigh



When we feel anxious, our breath tends to be shallow, causing an imbalance between carbon dioxide and oxygen in our bloodstream. To recalibrate, we need to release the carbon dioxide stored in the lungs. To do this:

- Take two inhales through the nose (until your lungs fully expand)
- Release the air through one LONG breath out through your mouth
- Repeat 2/3 times

16-Count Breathwork



Another great way to manage the stress response is the 16-count breathing technique:

- Breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds
- Hold for 2 seconds
- Breathe out through your mouth for 8 seconds
- Hold for 2 seconds
- Repeat for 1-5 minutes

The 15-minute Walk



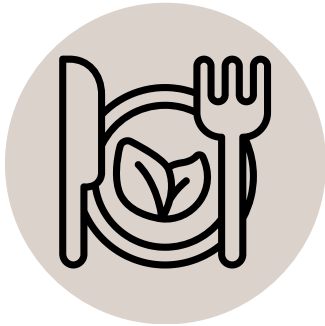
In as little as 15 minutes of walking, we can dramatically change our biochemistry, helping us to feel calmer and more in control. The benefits include:

- Burning off adrenaline & cortisol (stress hormones)
- Releasing dopamine (the reward chemical), endorphins (the painkiller) and oxytocin if you walk with a dog or another person.
- Regulating serotonin through sunlight exposure. Serotonin regulates our sleep/wake cycle.
- Widening our view (stress causes our view to narrow, leading to feelings of overwhelm)

Listening to something stimulating further enhances the positive effects.

DIET, SLEEP, EXERCISE

Diet



Eat a Balanced diet:

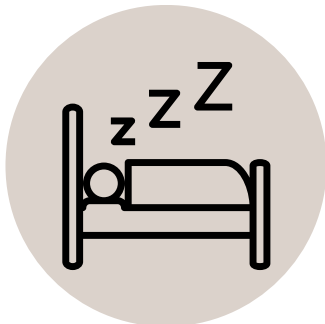
- Fruit and vegetables that are in season
- As much colour on your plate as possible
- Avoid processed food
- Limit caffeine, alcohol and salt
- Meal prep is key!

Supplements:

- Good multivitamin
- Vitamin D3/Omega 3/B12 & Folate
- Iron
- Calcium
- Collagen
- Black cohosh

N.B. just implementing one 'healthy' meal a day (every day) will make a positive difference to your long-term health and wellbeing.

Sleep



How to manage night-time worry/overthinking:

- Avoid turning the light on or reaching for your phone
- Bright light interrupts melatonin release, making the brain think it's time to get up
- It can be a complete sleep cycle before you fall back to sleep
- Leave a pad and pen by the side of the bed; scribble down anything that's bothering you
- Typically, you'll only need to do it for a couple of nights, and you won't wake up worrying again

Exercise



- Make it a priority
- Schedule it in your diary as you would any other important meeting
- Find something you enjoy
- Do it with someone else (accountability partner)!
- Join a club - gym, dancing, pilates, running, walking, cycling
- Focus on how you'll feel afterwards... REFRAME!
- Seek professional advice before you start!

OTHER TOOLS

- Talk to others! There's nothing to be ashamed of. The decline in both estrogen and testosterone can cause mental health problems that won't get better on their own.
- Find a good friend, doctor, therapist or coach who can help and support you.
- Join support groups - there are so many out there, and they're easy to find. **YOU ARE NOT ON YOUR OWN!**
- Try these additional tools to help manage your mental health:
 - Journaling (clinically proven to be the second-best thing - after therapy - for working through your issues)
 - Meditation
 - Breathwork
 - Pilates
 - Hobbies and Interests

FINALLY...

Self-care is not selfish...

You can't pour from an empty cup!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Related Articles (available at [jobbanks.net](https://www.jobbanks.net))**

- [Think Menopause Just Affects Middle-Aged Women? Think Again](#)
- [The Male Menopause \(Andropause\)](#).
- [5 Reasons Why ADHD Gets Misdiagnosed in Women](#)

- **Related Videos - Menopause (available on [YouTube.com/@jobbanks](https://www.youtube.com/@jobbanks))**

- [022 - MENOPAUSE MATTERS! The basic principles and symptoms of MENOPAUSE](#)
- [023 - 7 Ways to SUPPORT Someone Going Through MENOPAUSE](#)
- [024 - The STARTLING REASONS Why 1 in 4 WOMEN Consider Leaving Their Careers Due to MENOPAUSE](#)
- [025 - 15 REASONS why MENOPAUSE is an important topic of conversation - Why is menopause a thing?](#)

- **Related Videos - Andropause (available on [YouTube.com/@jobbanks](https://www.youtube.com/@jobbanks))**

- [026 - What is ANDROPAUSE? Uncovering the startling symptoms of LOW TESTOSTERONE in MEN](#)
- [027 - The Devastating Effects of LOW TESTOSTERONE \(Andropause\) in Men with Justin Powlesland](#)
- [044 - LOW TESTOSTERONE \(Andropause\) and the effects on MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH with Justin Powlesland](#)

- Visit Dr. Newson's [website](https://www.newsonhealth.co.uk) <https://www.newsonhealth.co.uk> for everything and anything to do with menopause, including HRT and other non-medication interventions.
- [The Balance App](#) is a brilliant tool with lots of valuable resources.
- NHS [menopause site](#).
- Johns Hopkins Medicine [menopause information](#).

MORE INFORMATION

There is more information on this and other topics on my website (jobbanks.net) and on my YouTube Channel (@JoBanks). Popular topics include:

- Menopause/Andropause
- Workplace Bullying
- Managing Stress, Anxiety, and Overwhelm
- Neurodivergence
- Enhancing Your Productivity
- Success Mindset
- Mental and Physical Health

You can also sign up to get my weekly newsletter straight to your email inbox!

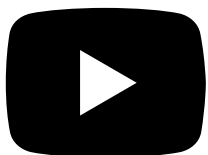
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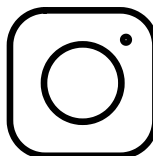
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