

# Menopause Newsletter

February 2023 Volume 8



Welcome to a new start for the Menopause Newsletter.

Now commissioned by the Health and Wellbeing Team, we'll be sharing information sources, advice routes, and personal stories to support our wonderful colleagues experiencing menopause and peri-menopause.

In this issue-

- Menopause and sleep
- Hydration and nutrition
- Manager's corner
- Further reading
- Menopause in real life

## The Menopause and Sleep

Hot flushes and night sweats can have a detrimental impact on sleep quality, but the change in hormone levels that happens during the menopause can also have a direct effect on your sleep cycle.

Add to this insomnia caused by mood disorders such as anxiety and depression, issues such as joint pain, and the increased need to visit the loo in the night, and it's no wonder that sleep is an issue for many going through the menopause. Read Healthline's article ***Can menopause cause insomnia?*** at <https://www.healthline.com/health/menopause/menopause-and-insomnia>



There are some tips to encourage better sleep, and many of them are good common sense solutions.

- Avoid caffeine, nicotine and screen-time later in the day
- Take regular exercise. Read how exercise can help you to sleep here- <https://www.sleepstation.org.uk/articles/sleep-tips/exercise-helps-you-sleep/>
- Don't nap in the day if you can, or limit it to a short (30 minute) early afternoon snooze
- Stick to a regular sleep routine
- Practice relaxation techniques
- Set up your bedroom to improve your sleep- there's advice from Sleepstation at [www.sleepstation.org.uk/articles/sleep-tips/the-ideal-bedroom-setup/](http://www.sleepstation.org.uk/articles/sleep-tips/the-ideal-bedroom-setup/)

Take a look at the NHS advice on ***How to get to sleep*** at [www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/how-to-get-to-sleep/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/how-to-get-to-sleep/) which includes a great audio guide to sleep problems.

There are also treatments available from your GP, such as HRT, or cognitive behavioural therapy. The scientific evidence for other supplements is limited, so it's worth checking with your GP before starting any treatment.

## Sleep help

For more information, support and techniques to improve your sleep, try these...

Sleep Foundation (2021) **Menopause and sleep** [www.sleepfoundation.org/women-sleep/menopause-and-sleep](http://www.sleepfoundation.org/women-sleep/menopause-and-sleep)

Women's Health Concern (2022) **Menopause and insomnia: Factsheet** [www.womens-health-concern.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/17-WHC-FACTSHEET-Menopause-and-insomnia-NOV2022-B.pdf](http://www.womens-health-concern.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/17-WHC-FACTSHEET-Menopause-and-insomnia-NOV2022-B.pdf)

Patient.info (2021) **How to alleviate your menopause sleep problems** <https://patient.info/news-and-features/how-to-get-better-sleep-during-menopause>

## Nutrition and hydration

Watch **Menopause: Continuing the conversation**- from the British Menopause Society and ITN Business this news-style programme gives guidance and advice on all aspects of menopause including a section on nutrition in menopause. <https://thebms.org.uk/publications/world-menopause-day-2022/>



The British Nutrition Foundation's **Nutrition and Menopause** resource has helpful pages on using nutrition and diet to manage menopause symptoms, and to reduce menopause related health risks. <https://www.nutrition.org.uk/life-stages/women/menopause> You can also listen to some lived experiences from real women and the menopause related diet and lifestyle changes they've made. <https://www.nutrition.org.uk/life-stages/women/menopause/hearing-lived-experiences/>

Healthline offers **11 Natural Remedies for Menopause Relief**, which includes eating foods rich in calcium and vitamin D, increasing your fruit and veg intake, the benefits of eating regular meals, and why you should eat protein. IT also states the case for drinking more water! <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/11-natural-menopause-tips>

Learn about how hormonal changes can affect your bone health, heart health, weight and mood in the **Healthy eating for the menopause factsheet** from Balance. [www.balance-menopause.com/menopause-library/healthy-eating-for-the-menopause](http://www.balance-menopause.com/menopause-library/healthy-eating-for-the-menopause)

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Worried about calcium and your bones? The Royal Osteoporosis Society offer their expertise in **What's the menopause got to do with bone health?** at [theros.org.uk/blog/2021-03-22-what-s-the-menopause-got-to-do-with-bone-health/](http://theros.org.uk/blog/2021-03-22-what-s-the-menopause-got-to-do-with-bone-health/)

We all know the benefits of keeping hydrated, but it's even more important during the menopause. Dehydration can contribute to dry skin, bloating, headaches, joint pain, memory loss, fatigue and UTIs to name a few!

Try Healthline's **12 Simple Ways to Drink More Water** [www.healthline.com/nutrition/how-to-drink-more-water](http://www.healthline.com/nutrition/how-to-drink-more-water)



# Managers' Menopause Corner

Information to enable compassionate management of staff experiencing the menopause.

A **CIPD Guide to managing menopause at work: guidance for line managers**

is available from their web site at [www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/culture/well-being/menopause/people-manager-guidance](http://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/culture/well-being/menopause/people-manager-guidance)

Produced in partnership with Bupa it offers practical advice on what a manager needs to know about the menopause to effectively support their team. Did you know that research from

Bupa shows that almost a million women have left their job because of menopausal symptoms? Read the guide to find out more.



Women's Health Concern (a branch of the British Menopause Society) have a **Menopause in the Workplace** web site [www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/menopause-in-the-workplace/](http://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/menopause-in-the-workplace/) packed with information, factsheets, infographics, videos, help and advice, the Menopause and the Workplace Resources section has some excellent further reading suggestions for managers. It also offers recommendations from the Joint Position Statement of the BMS, RCOG, RCGP, FSRH, FOM and FPH.

The Royal College of Nursing have good practice advice and collated guidance, resources and links to further information on their **Menopause at Work** web site [www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/womens-health/menopause/menopause-at-work](http://www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/womens-health/menopause/menopause-at-work)

NHS England also have guidance to help NHS organisations, line managers, and those working in the NHS understand more about the menopause. To learn how you can support colleagues experiencing menopause symptoms see the guide **Supporting our NHS people through menopause: guidance for line managers and colleagues** <https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/supporting-our-nhs-people-through-menopause-guidance-for-line-managers-and-colleagues/>



## Further reading

### Books available to borrow or reserve from your Trust library

Click on the title to visit the library catalogue

Henderson, A. (ed.) (2021) *Natural menopause : herbal remedies, aromatherapy, CBT, nutrition, exercise, HRT*. London: Dorling Kindersley.


Mukherjee, A. (2021) *The complete guide to the menopause : your toolkit to take control and achieve life-long health*. London: Vermilion.

### Available online:

Balance (2023) *Menopause library*. Available at: <https://www.balance-menopause.com/menopause-library/>

# Menopause in real life

**In this section we'd like to share real life stories from our wonderful staff of their menopause experiences. If you'd like to share your story, pass on some good advice, and let your colleagues know they're not in this alone, then contact [hwb@swft.nhs.uk](mailto:hwb@swft.nhs.uk)**


 My name is Justine Whitmore I am the Head of Wellbeing for GEH and SWFT. I am 50 years of age and went through a surgical menopause at the age of 46. I had a total hysterectomy that including removal of my ovaries and cervix. Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) was prescribed for me immediately post-op, due to my age and need to protect me from diseases such as osteoporosis. In many ways I was naive as to what this new me would be like. I thought only of the benefits of the surgery, which at the time were significant. It was only after a few weeks, when my recovery beyond the surgical ramifications came into view that menopause hit me like truck.



*With a surgical menopause you do not have the gradual fade of hormones, it's like plunging into a freezing cold lake in January with no clothes on. Suddenly, things were not the same and whilst the HRT was very supportive, there were things I had no thought about. Was I still a complete woman, or was I now in a different classification? My ability to recall and multi-task, always strengths of mine became harder. My body shape changed and no amount of crunches and sit-ups, dieting or firming creams can rescue me. So here I was grateful to have the offending organs removed but, in a no-man's land of who have I become?*

*As BREXIT hit, my HRT became unavailable, due to it being held in transit in France- ok I'll just change I thought, unfortunately the others I tried didn't suit me, so I had a period of 15 months where I did not have HRT. This was my first experience of hot flushes- can I just say at this point- WHO called them hot flushes- it's the most inadequate description of the raging inferno that starts in the core of my body, then spreading the tips of my toes, fingers and into each hair follicle, even my eyeballs feel hot. This heat creates for me, a tomato face, that should probably be UV recorded, with the most attractive lines of sweat dripping down my temples and off my chin, whilst I welcome the dance of a thousand cardigans. No amount of wafting is sufficient for this- the only choice is an open fridge door, air-conditioning on full blast or ice – placed strategically.*

*Due to being without HRT, and the development of new symptoms, I decided I needed to get a handle on this situation and therefore started to read about all the things that we can do to support ourselves. The menopause society has a great wealth of insights, I spoke with the local health shop to get natural supplements ( some of them do work), I read about exercises with weights supporting bone degeneration. I changed my diet, eating more vegetable and less processed foods and drank less alcohol. To improve my sleep, I used a cooling pillow. In fact, there are so many things that you can do which have a knock-on affect to other health benefits, that there really is an all- round benefit to change.*

*I'm now gratefully reunited with my HRT patches, and therefore a lot of my symptoms have now regressed but taking the time to evaluate the new us can be really liberating. So, whether it's the common symptoms of hot flushes, brain fog, sleep disturbance and mental health changes or the more extreme symptoms of night terrors, hair loss and allergic reactions. Taking the opportunity to being educated is the first step to taking control. Hopefully through this newsletter you too can feel empowered to start to make choices and to feel confident in the discussions you have with your healthcare professionals, managers, colleagues, and friends. The aim of this newsletter is to increase your understanding and be a support each other. It's as simple as "We Are Stronger Together".* 

## Support for you

For more information about menopause support within the Trusts please contact the Staff Health and Wellbeing Team

Email: [hwb@swft.nhs.uk](mailto:hwb@swft.nhs.uk)

Twitter: @GEH\_SWFT\_HWB

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