

Menopause

This leaflet provides information about the menopause. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your care.

What is menopause?

The menopause is considered a natural stage in a woman's life. It is defined when the period has stopped for a full year. The average age to go through the menopause in the UK is 51.

The perimenopause is when you are experiencing menopause symptoms but your periods have not yet stopped.

What are the signs and symptoms?

There are multiple signs and symptoms of the menopause and these can look very different in everyone. Symptoms can fluctuate and last for months or years. These may happen gradually or in response to medical intervention such as surgery or certain treatments.

Periods may change and become more irregular. You may notice other physical symptoms as well as mental health symptoms.

Common symptoms include:

- Hot flushes
- Changes in your mood, concentration or memory
- Fatigue
- Pain
- Sleep changes / insomnia
- Incontinence and bladder problems
- Weight changes
- Vaginal dryness
- Painful sex.

Do I need any tests to confirm the diagnosis?

You do not need any medical tests. The menopause is diagnosed after not experiencing a period for 12 months.

What treatments are available?

Treatment options will vary depending on your symptoms and individual circumstances such as your past medical history. Your GP will be able to discuss what treatments options are available to you.

Please see below for general lifestyle advice, including the useful sources of information.

Is there anything I can do to help myself?

Pelvic Floor Exercises

Your pelvic floor is a group of muscles found at the base of your pelvis.

They support your pelvic organs and surround the openings of the vagina, bowel and bladder helping maintain continence and enhance sexual function. There are two main forms of pelvic floor exercise: long hold and short hold.

1. **Long:** aims to work on your muscles' endurance.
Hold this contraction for as long as you can for up to 10 seconds. Then relax the muscles fully. Repeat this 10 times as able.
2. **Short:** aims to work on the quicker response from the muscles.
Draw up and tighten your pelvic floor muscles and then fully relax. Repeat this up to 10 to 20 times.

Exercise

Exercise has multiple benefits to health during the menopause. Exercise helps maintain healthy bones and muscles, helps keep a healthy cardiovascular system (heart) and can help manage other menopause symptoms.

It is especially important to consider weight-bearing exercise such as walking and / or resistance exercises to maintain or even build your muscles and keep bones healthy.

Mental health

It is common to experience changes in mood during the menopause. This can include but is not limited to, mood swings, anxiety, depression, anger and irritability. Other psychological symptoms include brain fog and / or poor concentration.

To help manage these symptoms it can be helpful to communicate openly and honestly with those around you including friends, family and / or colleagues.

General self-care can help manage mental health which can include keeping physically active, ensuring adequate hydration, nourishment and getting adequate sleep. General relaxation or breath work and doing activities that bring you joy (for example reading / listening to music / art work / yoga) can also facilitate a balanced self-care routine.

If you feel you are struggling with your mental health, it is important to contact your GP or local talking therapies to explore how they can help.

Diet

Due to hormonal and health changes a balanced healthy diet is recommended during all stages of the menopause. This is important for bone health, weight management, heart health and managing menopause symptoms too.

It is important to consider eating foods high in calcium and vitamin D for bone health. A diet that includes at least five portions of fruit and vegetables per day, oily fish and high fibre foods is recommended. Some people benefit from eating linseed or soya products. It is recommended to reduce refined sugars and processed foods as well as reducing alcohol intake, caffeine and stopping smoking.

Sleep

Due to a variety of physical and psychological reasons, sleep may be impacted during the menopause. To help improve this, try following a bedtime routine, avoid using screens before bed, keep the bedroom a comfortable and cool temperature, exercise regularly but not close to bedtime, reduce caffeine later in the day and try to avoid eating larger meals before bed.

Useful sources of information

General

[Menopause Experts UK | Menopause Workplace Training | Positive Pause](#)
[Menopause - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\) www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/](#)

Pelvic Health Resource Page

[Patient Resources - St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust \(stgeorges.nhs.uk\)](#)



For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Was this information helpful? Yes / No

Please let us know, contact patient.information@stgeorges.nhs.uk and include the leaflet title.

Thank you.

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings.

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS UK

The NHS provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.

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