

# simplyhormones

making sense of menopause



*Kathryn Colas, Founder and CEO*

Finding out what symptoms you have is the starting point to helping resolve all those crazy issues.

We've put together an A - Z of symptoms and solutions for you to consider.

Enjoy!

## A – Z of MENOPAUSE SYMPTOMS & SOLUTIONS

For more information visit our website [www.simplyhormones.com](http://www.simplyhormones.com)

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ACNE

Acne usually shows up on your face and is often the result of hormone imbalance.

### ***Treatment***

- What are you eating? Seek out the services of a professional nutritionist or someone who specialises in hormone balance, like [www.happyhormonesforlife.co.uk](http://www.happyhormonesforlife.co.uk). Finding out the simple basics can be a great help.
- Seek professional advice to dispel the myths of **HRT**, try [www.womens-health-concern.org](http://www.womens-health-concern.org).
- Balancing your **Hormones** can be rejuvenating and will definitely help with any skin problems.

### **BLOATING AND FLUID RETENTION**

If you have not experienced this before, in common with constipation, it can be a monthly, cyclical occurrence.



### ***Treatment***

- Drinking plenty of water helps; especially a full glass of water on waking.
- Perhaps mixing a concoction of young dandelion leaves also helps, the downside is, it tastes like pond water... the choice is yours!
- Alternatively, there is a whole range of diuretics available across the counter in all major pharmacies and health stores but, for me, the best bet is to save your money and drink plenty of water.
- Most importantly, what are you eating? Perhaps it's time to review your eating habits, consult a nutritionist

### **BREAST SWELLING AND TENDERNESS**

This symptom is a natural process of your body's monthly cycle. Some women experience it to a greater degree than others. Feel your breasts, when bathing or showering, for any unusual lumps or swelling, inverted nipples or general changes to shape. If you find anything 'different' it may not necessarily be life threatening, but you should see your doctor to eliminate this anxiety and any underlying causes. Suppressed anxieties can be the cause of all sorts of pain and illnesses. If you are worried about anything in your life, analyse it and sort it if you can.

### ***Treatment:***

- Things aren't quite right? See your doctor straight away, to rule out all doubt.
- On its own, Oil of Evening Primrose has proved most efficacious for many women. You don't need to take it forever, but it has no harmful effects if you do. You could take it for three months, then leave it to see what happens. It is known to have anti-inflammatory properties and is available at your local pharmacy or health food store.
- HRT can help, as part of an all-round programme.
- For natural remedies, seek out a holistic medical practitioner, homeopath or naturalist.

**Caution:** Do, please, have any breast pain, swelling or changes in size or shape of breasts checked by your GP, who will arrange for a hospital appointment if necessary.

## **Cardiovascular Disease**

is the biggest killer of women today ~ but it's not a death sentence. *You* can reduce the chances of falling foul of this baddie, just by taking a look at your stress levels; diet and exercise – nothing drastic but try to make small changes in all areas of your life which will gradually bring peace and stability and a new *you*.

Cholesterol serves many important biological functions and your body is good at manufacturing all that it needs. It all starts to go wrong, however, as a result of stress, plus too much consumption of processed foods and the usual culprits, alcohol and smoking. Getting some exercise will also prove beneficial.

If you eat too much chemically processed fatty foods, your cholesterol levels could rise which result in the fat attaching itself to the lining of your artery walls. This can lead to hardening of the arteries, high blood pressure and coronary heart disease. Cholesterol levels naturally rise with age.

**Cancer:** The age most related to any cancer diagnosis is the over 60's. *More women die of cardiovascular disease than cancer.* Women who smoke are more susceptible to high cholesterol levels than their non-smoking sisters.

Nearly one third of all heart attacks in women go undiagnosed. *Not good news but at least gender differences are now being recognised.*

## **Treatment**

- Take a look at your lifestyle and take action to reduce your stress ~ take some time out to review what's going on in your life, both professionally and personally. You will soon feel the benefits
- For every 1% cut you make in cholesterol consumption, there is a 2% drop in heart attack risk
- Re-train the way you eat.
- Red Rice Yeast is a natural statin. One woman told me, her cholesterol level was '7' and after taking Red Rice Yeast, within three months her levels had dropped to a more normal '3'. I, personally, do not know anything about this product, but it is a choice to consider.
- Do not diet! Diets are bad for you. A balanced diet consists of food that releases carbohydrates slowly, such as brown pasta and sweet potatoes and, yes porridge. This will prevent you from suffering dips in blood sugar levels during the day.
- Avoid, or reduce, processed foods (cakes/biscuits/crisps/fast food) and even fizzy drinks.
- Reduce your salt intake
- Lose weight. If you are 10% over your ideal weight, you are at 30% higher risk of having a heart attack
- Increase physical activity
- Moderate your alcohol consumption
- Stop smoking

By engaging yourself in these lifestyle changes, you will improve your quality of life as you age and perhaps reduce the risk of cancer.

## IS THAT THE TIME?



You may find that your concept of time changes. You become forgetful. This is very common!

Turning up for appointments becomes problematical. Time + Distance take on a whole new meaning. Plan ahead!.

Glancing at your diary and remembering all the details no longer holds water. You may now need to take a thorough look on a daily basis to confirm and re-confirm what is happening in the next 24hr, 48hr and for the rest of the week. Where you are supposed to be, and, most importantly, how long it will take to get there and what method of transport you will use.

On discussing this issue with your GP, you will probably be told that your daily life is causing you stress and that you should try and change things. This is only partially correct; these are all symptoms of menopause - crazy hormones will cause you havoc and cause you to have a different perception of what is going on around you.

If you were coping reasonably well before, then this symptom will now cause you grief.

## CONSTIPATION

Often a monthly experience, in the week preceding the bleed (even if you don't have one). You may already be familiar with this on a monthly basis?

Lifestyle: What are you eating? A lighter diet could be the answer, eating more fish, for example - ask your fishmonger for some suggestions.

One of the biggest reasons we get constipated is dehydration, we don't drink enough fluids. Please avoid fizzy drinks, too much sugar and remember that the 'zero' rated drinks use processed sweeteners. Be aware!

### *Treatment*

- Drink at least TWO LITRES OF WATER per day. No kidding! Make this room temperature as ice cold water will just give you 'brain freeze' and your body will resent it. Try it!
- A glass of room temperature water on waking works every time. It really wakes up the system and gets you going!
- Improve your nutrition ~ make gradual changes to a more balanced diet
- Try to eat more fish instead of meat, or, reduce your consumption of red meat.
- Include more vegetarian options in your diet.
- It's not easy to change eating habits on your own. Take a look at [www.happyhormonesforlife.com](http://www.happyhormonesforlife.com)
- Stop wasting money on laxatives when WATER works!
- Have you tried a sprinkling of Spirulina powder in a glass of fruit juice? It's pure dried powdered seaweed – it's a mucky shade of green, smells disgusting, but mixed into a fruit drink, can be quite palatable! Two teaspoonfuls a day, or every other day, as required, should do the trick.
- Something else you can try is freshly crushed linseed meal, sprinkled onto your cereal or added to smoothies, etc.

## DEPRESSION AND OTHER MENTAL DISORDERS AT MENOPAUSE

Depression affects many women at menopause and it's more often hormonal related.

Depression is characterised by unhappy feelings of hopelessness. A feeling of such immense distress and an inability to cope. *Depression is not a normal part of ageing, but it is the most common health problem in later life.* There are certain key points that you should become aware of as depression comes in many and varied forms:



- **Hormonal depression:** When a doctor sees a patient who is obviously distressed, one thing they rarely consider is 'hormonal depression'. You may already have experienced this throughout menstruation; feeling down, just pottering around because you don't feel like doing much but you know this feeling will pass. These feelings can increase as you go through menopause so it's worth mentioning to your health care professional. Be persistent! Ask to be referred to a menopause specialist.
- **Other Considerations:**
- *Money, status and power.* Money: usually the lack of it, perhaps a partner does not contribute to the family purse. Status: Either at home or at work, you may feel 'put upon', not being allowed to be *you*. A 'doormat' is another description. Power: This goes hand in hand with Status. If you do not feel respected, your sense of power dissipates, you cease to have value in your mind.
- *Discrimination and exploitation.* Discrimination: not in the racial sense, but more to do with gender. Exploitation: Gender again, and can apply at work or at home. You are constantly taken advantage of, and over time, allow this to happen. You feel powerless to do anything about it.
- *The consequences of being a carer.* You become a slave without realising it. You may think you do it for love, but it takes over, is all encompassing.
- *Sexual and physical violence.* You may still have children at home causing you to not trust your gut instinct to get out of there. There are many agencies that can help - I urge you to take the first steps and find the strength to get out of there and change your life for the better. As a depressed person, you could be living life in a foggy existence, boxed in. "Nothing brings me pleasure: everything brings me endless sorrow" (Countess Sofia Tolstoy, 10th January 1895) If this describes your existence, then it will have a profound effect on your family. You cannot see the wood for the trees and they understand even less.
- Children. Do you scream and shout at your children without reason? Do you abuse them in any other way?

You are not alone. It is something men rarely understand as they neither experience menopause nor take on the role of carer, traditionally a woman's role.

A more holistic approach to menopause these days has resulted in women now attending counselling sessions with either a Clinical Psychologist or Occupational Therapist, who can definitely help you on the path to recovery.

*The key to recovering from depression is making connections. Connections with your life; this may take you back to childhood, jobs you've had in the past, family ties, etc., and of course, **your own feelings of being undervalued.** Talking this through with someone who understands menopause will really help you. Please email us [enquiries@simplyhormones.com](mailto:enquiries@simplyhormones.com) if you would like to use our own counselling service.*

Do not be afraid seek help. You may not think you can make changes, but a professional counsellor will be able to see your situation from a different perspective and provide support.

**Bi-Polar (manic-depressive)** symptoms could be something you experience during the climacteric (menopause). Thankfully it is usually mild and temporary and does not usually necessitate the use of drugs and is therefore not really a true diagnosis of Bi-Polar, it just feels that way! It is serious enough, however, to the women experiencing these wild moments. One day total-euphoria, the next, depression, possibly sprinkled with thoughts of suicide.

### **Suicide**

Definitely not talked about and sometimes described by women as 'I want my life to end'. It's a very real symptom of PMT/Menopause but stays under wraps as it's too embarrassing to discuss. These feelings are caused by hormonal imbalance. Seek professional help at the earliest opportunity, especially if you feel you are losing touch with reality.

Suicide comes in many guises (not necessarily resulting in death) and can manifest itself in the destruction of family relationships as well as poor performance at work and potentially putting yourself at risk of losing your job. This is very real. If this is happening to you, please seek help. It won't go away on its own.

### ***Treatment for Depression***

- Avoid isolation ~ speak to someone you can trust; a friend, family member, member of the clergy. They can all serve the need you have for close intimate human contact.
- If you can't take that first step, call the Samaritans on 08457 909 90 90 or go to [www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)
- A proper balanced HRT programme can help ~ ask for a referral to a specialist
- Avoid "self treatment".
- Don't be tempted to improve stamina by eating chocolate bars and drinking caffeine rich drinks, including cola drinks. This sugar high is temporary and leaves you feeling more depressed.
- Avoid alcohol as this can result in binge drinking causing ther long term health problems
- Avoid sleeping pills
- Try Mindfulness, Meditation or Yoga.
- Take warm milk at bedtime (do people still do that?)
- Take a warm bath at bedtime, at least two or three times a week
- Try a herbal sleep remedy. It won't work if you've been drinking alcohol. See [www.weleda.co.uk](http://www.weleda.co.uk)
- Pamper yourself with regular sessions of relaxing neck and back massage.
- ***Clinical Psychologist*** - this works. It's a form of talking therapy.

### **Vertigo/Claustrophobia**

You may have experienced vertigo, in a mild form, after having children. This is when the "no fear" of your youth disappears as you take on the responsibility of caring for your children. Looking over balconies, climbing trees (as you do!) no longer holds the same thrill.

### ***Treatment***

- If it becomes a serious issue and prevents you from leading a normal life, seek professional help. Phone your GP if you are too scared to leave your house. Phone the Samaritans.

- See your GP and mention menopause as they don't always see the big picture and have not always had any medical training in menopause.
- If you first experience either vertigo or claustrophobia as you go through perimenopause ~ learn to understand your boundaries, but understand this is a psychological problem and can be helped with counselling.
- Like many of the psychological symptoms, avoid isolation and learn to express your fears. If you talk to your family and they begin to understand what you are going through, they will want to give you support. Communication is key.

### **Smoking, alcohol abuse and drug abuse**

Binge drinking can cause long term health problems. The result of this abuse will show in your face, and contribute towards dehydration and wrinkles; as elasticity disappears at a faster rate. Your skin no longer has the resources to heal itself; throw in a lack of personal grooming and a proper diet, and you end up with a faster ageing process, leaving you looking drawn and haggard before your time.

Smoking, as we all know, can kill. Smoking has similar effects on your skin as alcohol. Drug and alcohol abuse has a detrimental effect on your whole life and anyone who comes into contact with you. Drug and alcohol abuse at menopause is often a result of depression in any of its many guises and you should seek help. No-one will judge you. All the support agencies are there to help you recover and find your life again.

### ***Treatment***

- Seek professional help
- Try your GP or other counselling service that you feel comfortable with
- Do not isolate yourself
- Contact Samaritans if you feel you have no-one to turn to 08457 909 90 90  
[www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

### **FATIGUE**



A feeling, on waking, that you spent the night on the tiles but don't remember anything about it! A general lethargy, that could last throughout the day. A monthly problem you may have experienced for years, only now it is occurring on a daily basis and is debilitating.

The wavering levels of hormones are the root cause of broken sleep patterns.

Other things to consider are what's going on in your life? What stresses and strains are you under? Do you feel demoralised, powerless? Are you doing what you really want to do? These things can also affect your sleep pattern.

### ***Treatment***

- Go for a walk, find some green space and just BE. Take some quiet time to think. Do you feel as if your life has gone pear-shaped? Is this as good as it gets?
- What can you do about it? Start thinking about you and about all your choices – it gets quite scary, but over a period of time you will come up with some answers.
- Ask us about our course: How to Survive Menopause without Losing your Mind! It works!
- HRT can help fatigue.

- Bio-identical hormones can help in the same way. It may surprise you how, by rebalancing your hormones, your health improves.
- To restore a good quality of life, doing nothing is not an option!
- Is there anything in your diet that may need looking at? Seek out the services of a recommended nutritionist. Take a look at [www.happyhormonesforlife.com](http://www.happyhormonesforlife.com)

## GOUT

This is generally hereditary, even in women, and will manifest itself around the time of menopause. Gout is caused by excessive uric acid crystals in the blood, brought on by alcohol and rich foods. People who suffer from gout either overproduce uric acid or under excrete it. These crystals cause parts of the body to become sore and swell, usually around the feet. It is extremely painful.

### *Treatment*

- Without being facetious, the obvious treatment is to avoid alcohol and spicy food
- See your GP

## HEART PALPITATIONS

Often linked with Anxiety: Heart Palpitations, Panic Attacks, Tearfulness, Feeling Overwhelmed or Out of Control, Stuttering, Fragmented Sleep. This group of symptoms manifests itself as the very real perception that you can't cope. In medical terms, it is quite normal at menopause and is caused by a lack of oestrogen.

Your heart may start to beat faster, the anxiety then kicks in and you feel overwhelmed and out of control. You can't work out what is going on. Having juggled so many balls in the air for so many years, suddenly it all becomes too much. Even remembering appointments becomes difficult.

*This is a signal for you to make changes in your life.* If anyone says the wrong word, you could burst into tears. You may stutter and not understand why, it's disconcerting. This can also affect sleep patterns. You are wakeful, but don't understand why. These symptoms take you beyond the normal realms of stress and anxiety.

### *Treatment*

- Make sure you have some time in your day when you can just concentrate on YOU.
- Mindfulness is a good option. Takes you out of the anxiety and stress areas you are experiencing and teaches you how to deal with it.
- Going for a walk is often good advice.
- Fragmented sleep ~ try a herbal sleep remedy to re-establish regular sleep patterns. We recommend [www.weleda.co.uk](http://www.weleda.co.uk)
- Cut down on your alcohol intake as a matter of course (drink more water)
- Drink warm milk, have a warm bath ~ take time for yourself, relax
- *The key is to relax, breath slowly and deeply, concentrate on your breathing, if your mind wanders, bring it back, keep doing this.*
- Learn to laugh, learn to sing.
- Learn to speak more slowly, it helps.
- Try to avoid getting flustered, even if colleagues are shouting for a result. Take a deep breath.

- Delegate!
- Stop saying "yes" to everyone!
- Get the family on your side ~ tell them they must take responsibility for various household chores, including shopping, cooking and cleaning, as you are unwell and need more time to yourself. You do!
- Go on strike at home ~ that usually works!
- A Clinical Psychologist or Occupational Therapist could help by talking through your lifestyle and getting things into perspective.

### **Heart Attack or Stroke**

This is a rare condition, but at onset of peri-menopause, some women have experienced serious heart problems. If you suspect this is happening to you, contact your GP straight away. Having seen your GP at the earliest opportunity, you may find that your badly behaving hormones have created such a rush, that your whole system is temporarily out of sync. No permanent damage has been done. This is a rare symptom ~ you are more likely to experience palpitations.

### **HOT FLUSHES**

Always catch you out when you least expect them. It's a feeling of intense heat emanating from your shoulders and proceeding up through your neck and face. You may not recognise stress but your body decides that it is so.



#### ***Treatment***

- Wearing cotton, or natural fabrics, and loose clothing is good advice. This symptom catches you out in the middle of winter when you feel the need to excuse yourself from wherever you are and nip outside for some fresh air. All very well, but what do you do if you are on the 4th or 44th floor, or, teaching in a classroom? Take a look at [www.promensil.co.uk](http://www.promensil.co.uk) for good quality solutions.
- Battery operated fans are a good option. It's time to talk about this, anyway; bring menopause out into the open.
- Reviewing your lifestyle should be a consideration. Mind/body healing, changes to eating habits, exercise and how you live your life could make a great difference to your peace of mind and thus reduce the extent of your symptoms.
- HRT or Bio-identical hormones are both choices that can resolve this symptom.

### **INCONTINENCE**

Most cases of incontinence at menopause and beyond can be classified as *stress incontinence*. If it's not stress incontinence, your GP or Gynaecologist will probably refer you to a Urologist who, of course, is an expert on the subject and will put you right.

#### **Stress Incontinence:**

This will make you laugh! I thought Stress Incontinence was incontinence caused by the stresses of our everyday lives. You may think the same.

Not so ~ it is caused by the stress suffered by your body as a result of childbirth. It is usually temporary. Women get very bruised during childbirth and is temporary at that time.

Over the years, the bladder neck becomes less flexible, resulting in leakage, which worsens around menopause because muscle strength isn't as good as it was.

How does all this affect *you*? You will experience some heightened moments when trying to get to the loo before you pee your pants ~ and this is where your sense of humour comes in ~ hopefully you can have a laugh about it afterwards!

You would think, after all these years, that you would know when you needed to pee. Not so. The incontinence button can be switched on at any time, usually when you are nowhere near the loo. You cross your legs tightly, pull up your pelvic floor, wait a moment for the feeling to pass to allow you time to get to the loo, but you feel so scared that you're not going to make it. Some don't!

#### Ethnic Variations

There is considerable ethnic variation. African and some Asian women who squat routinely, have no problems with stress incontinence.

#### ***Treatment:***

- In the vast majority of cases, this temporary condition is resolved by pelvic floor exercise. This should be done by a specialist physiotherapist or nurse practitioner who will instruct you on a 1:1 basis for best results.
- Clinical Pilates on a 1:1 basis can also prove helpful. Start off with 1:1 and once you've got the hang of it, move on to group sessions to keep your whole central core in good shape.
- If you are going to be out shopping for a period of time, it can pay to wear a sanitary towel. At least you won't suffer the embarrassment of wet knickers.
- Wearing a sanitary towel could also help. If it's difficult for you to just get up and go to the loo, the towel can absorb minor leakage until you have had an opportunity to deal with it.

#### **IRRITABILITY or Psycho!**



Irritability, Fatigue, Hot Flushes, Night Sweats, Fragmented Sleep, depression

#### ***Treatment***

- All these and more, can benefit from HRT, bio-identical hormones or other natural methods of hormonal balance. Worried about HRT? There is no reason to fear HRT, it is a genuine choice.
- All these symptoms can benefit from changing to a more balanced diet and learning how to relax.
- Make time for *you*.

#### **JOINT PAIN**

**Joint Pains, stiffness to joints and muscle spasms** are as a result of lack of oestrogen.

#### ***Treatment***

- Hormonal balance in the form of HRT or Bio-identical hormones can help resolve this condition.

- Try gentle exercise in the mornings to "warm up" for the day. Join a class for Yoga or Pilates, to get you started. This form of gentle exercise eases stiffness and aids relaxation
- Swimming is a great exercise where the buoyancy supports your limbs
- Try omega 3, 6, 9 oil supplement in capsule form, like linseed oil or fish oil. They are well-known to keep joints well oiled and offer other benefits not yet fully researched, but understood to work. My WD40 I call it!

## MEMORY LOSS

This can be as silly as taking the wrong turning in familiar surroundings when you are out driving, or not being able to find the right word in conversation, or forgetting names and places. You could probably find that when the conversation ends, you remember all those names, places and vocabulary! Either way it can be a pretty scary experience. *Like me, you may think you have Alzheimer's. Please be re-assured, you do not.*



### *Treatment*

- Memory loss happens to young people as well, you know!
- Try to keep mentally active; read, play games, do puzzles and crosswords.
- Keep up to date with modern innovations, don't stagnate.
- If you go blank when speaking to a group of people, learn to bluff your way out of it (men do it all the time!) The more you try to remember things the worse it becomes. Let it go, think of something else and quite often the original thought returns.
- Discover many ways of presenting the subject, then, if you find yourself out of sync. have some key words available to prompt you. It's not the answer, but it all helps.

## MIGRAINE

*Migraine is a very common neurobiological headache disorder that is caused by increased excitability of the central nervous system. It ranks among the world's most disabling medical illnesses. Diagnosis is based on the headache's characteristics and associated symptoms. The economic and social effect of migraine is substantial. It affects patients' quality of life and impairs work, social activities and family life - The Lancet, 2004 by Stephen D Silberstein of the Jefferson Headache Centre.*

Change is the ignition point for the onset of migraine. Particularly so at the peri-menopausal and post-menopausal stages of life; hormones are unstable and in a state of anarchy. Many women experience migraine for the first time when they are peri-menopausal. Until your hormonal system settles down again (up to 4 years after menopause) you may still experience

### **Recognising Signs**

If you can learn to analyse your own migraine so that you are aware of the physical changes to your body prior to attack, you may benefit from medication that is taken "at the first sign of migraine". Some migraines take 3 or 4 days to manifest themselves, perhaps starting in the spine around shoulder blade level, creating a muscle spasm and travelling up to your shoulder, neck and base of skull, stimulating the occipital nerves in readiness for the pain to start flowing. By the time it reaches your face, around eyes, nose and cheeks, the migraine is already in full flow.

*In my own case, I discovered my migraines were symptomatic of things going on in my life that I didn't want to deal with. Once I'd sorted the problem migraines happened less often. I could go months without one. It's obviously my Achilles heel. At least I know when I'm getting one that there's generally a very good reason for it and that it's not medical.*

### **An Aura**

Others experience an aura, lights flashing, a kaleidoscope pattern in one or both eyes, which could be in black and white, or colour, and a sensitivity to light, and a one-sided pain. Supported by a feeling of nausea or actual vomiting. **Cluster Headaches** also fall into the migraine category.

Migraines can last from 24 hours to 3 or 4 days and there is, so far, no absolute cure.

### **Treatment**

- The early intervention of taking painkillers when you first get symptoms, can stop a headache more effectively.
- Eat little and often, especially starchy foods, such as bread or pasta.
- Exercise to relax tight muscles in neck and back, as these can worsen headaches. (swimming is particularly good)
- Have a regular neck and back massage. I recommend cranio-sacral therapy

Neurologists have about four very different betablocker drugs, which in most cases offer an 80% success rate. These drugs are not painkillers, they are a sort of diversionary tactic.

- Don't try to fight it. Taking part in strong physical activity or trying to "work through" a migraine usually has the effect of making it worse. Try to relax and take it easy.
- We spoke to our neurologist consultant contact about Acupuncture and electrical pulse transmitters for use with migraine and he said that these two forms of treatment were useful and did work where pain was constant, a trapped nerve, for instance. However, in his experience, they did not work on migraine.

### **HRT**

Depending on your physiological pattern, HRT can help reduce migraine symptoms and could be considered as part of your overall programme to improve your quality of life.

### **Alternative Treatments**

Learn to recognise your stress levels and take steps to relax, can be helpful. Anything that makes you feel good, does you good. It may not cure migraine, but could go some way to reducing its effects on your life and become more bearable. Some foods can be the cause, check our [www.hormonesforlife.com](http://www.hormonesforlife.com) to review this.

### **MOUTH ULCERS**

The bane of the monthly cycle for many women, for many years. Just as you felt you had grown out of them, they come back with a vengeance in your 40's as you go through menopause. They seem to disappear post-menopause.

### **Treatment**

- There's no absolute cure, though hormonal re-balance can often help.
- Good oral hygiene, brushing teeth at least twice a day gives relief

- Rinsing your mouth with a solution of salt water also gives relief
- Topical applications, available from all good pharmacies, give temporary relief ~ salt's cheaper!

## NUMBNESS

- **Numbness, Crawling Skin, Pins and Needles**

This can affect various parts of your body. Some women experience crawling skin across their shoulder blades. It is a weird feeling, like something moving slowly under your skin ~ it's gone in a trice. Most of us have experienced pins and needles and numbness; as a menopausal symptom it makes a brief appearance from time to time and no-one is sure why. It's comforting just to know that you are not the only one it is happening to.

## NIGHT SWEATS



Can happen any time of the day or night. Even more stressful to some women than having Flushes. You start to perspire profusely. Some women change their sleeping arrangements in an effort not to disturb their partner. Changing sheets at night and taking cooling showers is more common than you think. These sweats can last well into post-menopause, but should not be as bad as in the perimenopause.

### *Treatment*

- Hormone rebalance through HRT or bio-identical hormones has proved most efficacious for this symptom.
- Wear short sleeved tops, whatever the weather!
- Some Red Clover supplements do actually work. Look for 'evidence based'. That means it's been clinically tested to work. Many women complain about side effects with Black Cohosh and this should not be taken if you are taking prescriptive medicine. In any event, tell your doctor. We recommend <https://promensil.co.uk>
- Sage, in liquid form can be beneficial. Take about 15 drops in water or juice, every day. It takes about a month to work. Cancer patients who have become early menopausal have been known to benefit from it

## REDUCED MUSCLE TONE

### **Reduced Muscle Tone and Breast Sag**

The decline in your hormones at Menopause signal your body to take on a different role. Through lack of use, muscles will atrophy and eventually cease to have a function

### *Treatment*

- Exercise, pure and simple.
- Due to other illnesses, some people have learned the art of "slow" exercise. This can benefit many people. Once you build up stamina, you can increase your activity, move on to more strenuous exercise.
- Exercise needn't be expensive. If you live in a town, you can walk quickly round the block ~ in the country, a walk across the fields. Striding out is the key.
- Wear a good bra (but don't you just hate wearing bras now, after all these years?)

## **SKIN CONDITION - DRY SKIN & EYES**

Your skin is probably the most abused part of your body in terms of exposure to environmental hazards, particularly the sun. Your skin is also a main target to react with all your hormones. The combined issue of retreating hormones and sunbathing, now take their toll. You will sweat less, your skin will become dryer in most cases. Your skin could begin itching. The re-growth of damaged skin slows down. Neglecting your skin is an abuse to your body!

### ***Treatment***

- Apply moisturisers to avoid excessive drying and possibly cracking of the skin. Cosmetics are a very personal issue, but any good quality skin cream applied to the face and body should aid its conservation. Do read the label and watch out for the inclusion of too many chemicals and skin drying ingredients, like alcohol.
- You may have noticed that you become thirstier as you age ~ you should be drinking at least two litres of water daily, this helps preserve the "plumpness" in your skin.

Eye dryness is a result of the atmosphere you work and live in, as well as a symptom of the ageing process.

*I experienced dry eyes for a few months – it may be temporary but can return.*

## **SMOKING, ALCOHOL & DRUGS**

### **Smoking, alcohol abuse and drug abuse**

Drinking on a regular, daily basis can lead to binge drinking and cause long term health problems as well as social problems. The result of this abuse will show in your face, and contribute towards dehydration and wrinkles; as elasticity disappears at a faster rate. Your skin no longer has the resources to heal itself, you may notice a reluctance to pay attention to personal grooming or eating properly. This results in a faster ageing process, leaving you looking drawn and haggard before your time.

### ***Treatment***

- Seek professional help
- Try your GP or other counselling service that you feel comfortable with
- Do not isolate yourself
- Contact Samaritans if you feel you have no-one to turn to 08457 909 90 90 or click on the link below



[www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

**THYROID - what about it?** Symptoms of over or under-active thyroids are similar to menopausal symptoms resulting from a lack of oestrogen.

**Thyroid Problems – What are they?** Your thyroid is a butterfly-shaped gland located at the base of your neck, just below your Adam's apple. Although it weighs less than an ounce, the thyroid gland has an enormous effect on your health. The sole function of the thyroid is to make thyroid hormone. This hormone has an effect on nearly all tissues of the body where it increases cellular activity. The function of the thyroid therefore is to regulate the body's metabolism.

All aspects of your metabolism, from the rate at which your heart beats to how quickly you burn calories, are regulated by thyroid hormones. As long as your thyroid releases the proper amounts of these hormones, your system functions normally.

But sometimes your thyroid doesn't produce enough hormones, upsetting the balance of chemical reactions in your body. This condition is known as **hypothyroidism**, or *under active thyroid disease*. Women, especially aged 40 plus, are more likely to have an under active thyroid than men.

The condition seldom causes symptoms in the early stages, but over time, untreated hypothyroidism can cause a number of health problems. In common with many other health problems, the onset of hypothyroidism can be triggered by a whole range of other conditions that may have developed within your body. Nutrient deficiencies, excess acidity caused by modern diets, Toxic and pathogenic overloads can all contribute.

- **Goiters** ~ A thyroid goiter is a dramatic enlargement of the thyroid gland. Goiters are often removed for cosmetic reasons or, more commonly, because they compress other vital structures of the neck including the trachea and the oesophagus making breathing and swallowing difficult.
- **Hyperthyroidism** ~ Hyperthyroidism means too much thyroid hormone. Current methods used for treating a hyperthyroid patient are radioactive iodine, anti-thyroid drugs, or surgery. Each method has advantages and disadvantages and is selected for individual patients. Many times the situation will suggest that all three methods are appropriate, while other circumstances will dictate a single best therapeutic option. Surgery is the least common treatment selected for hyperthyroidism.

## **TINNITUS**

A buzzing, thumping or ringing sound in the ears. Can be intermittent, or more constant. As a menopausal symptom, it comes and goes at will, and is not normally long lasting.

**It is estimated that 1 out of every 5 people experience some degree of tinnitus.** Tinnitus is classified into two forms: objective and subjective. Objective Tinnitus, the rarer form, consists of head noises audible to other people in addition to the sufferer. The noises are usually caused by vascular anomalies, repetitive muscle contractions, or inner ear structural defects. The sounds are heard by the sufferer and are generally external to the auditory system. This form of tinnitus means that an examiner can hear the sound heard by the sufferer by using a stethoscope. Benign causes, such as repetitive muscle contractions may be the cause of objective tinnitus.

**What do we hear?** Many sufferers report that their tinnitus sounds like the high-pitched background squeal emitted by some computer monitors or television sets. Others report noises like hissing steam, rushing water, chirping crickets, bells, breaking glass, or even chainsaws. Some report that their tinnitus temporarily spikes in volume with sudden head motions during aerobic exercise, or with each footfall while jogging.

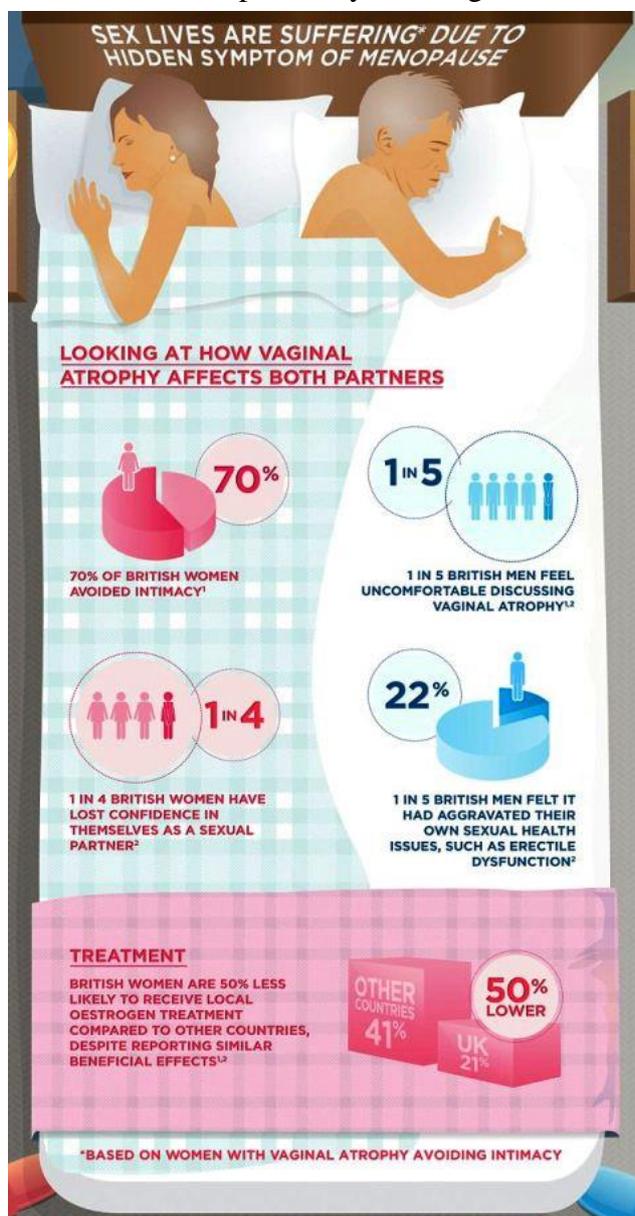
**What causes tinnitus?** In a database of 1687 tinnitus patients, no known cause was identified for 43% of the cases, and noise exposure was the cause for 24% of the cases. Allergic Reactions Food: Specific foods may trigger tinnitus. Problem foods include red wine, grain-based spirits, cheese, and chocolate. One contributor reported hearing tones after consuming honey. Another contributor notes that these same foods are on the list known to trigger migraine headaches; additional migraine foods include soy and anything including soy, MSG, very ripe bananas, avocados, and citrus fruits. Marijuana: Marijuana usage may worsen pre-existing cases of tinnitus

### Treatment

- Check with your GP you may have excessive wax in the ear or may need to be referred to a specialist

## VAGINAL DRYNESS

There is nothing like a good image to get the point across! Vaginal Dryness/Atrophy is pain, sometimes accompanied by bleeding with intercourse and loss of libido or sexual desire



Ignore it at your peril! Vaginal Atrophy, its clinical name, will cause you unnecessary distress. As women age, all areas of the vagina will dry out (atrophy), where sex is excruciatingly painful and can cause bleeding. You may find your libido also disappears. This has the combined effect of not only causing problems in the bedroom but also your own confidence levels will be affected. What can you do about this? Doing nothing is not an option! You may find that you start to itch a lot, after intercourse. This is all down to the changes in flora in the vaginal area. The acidity levels are no longer as protective as they were before.

### Treatment

- If you and your partner are still talking to each other... increase the length of time you spend in arousal before intercourse. This can naturally increase vaginal lubrication. *This didn't work for me - there was nothing to be aroused as far as I was concerned.*
- Topical gels, etc., are available from major pharmacies and supermarkets. Do read the label and make sure it's recommended for vaginal dryness or vaginal atrophy otherwise you're wasting your money and emotion.

- I recommend Sylk and another product called 'Yes, Yes, Yes', both natural lubricants and available over the counter. I also find it works for Thrush and general vaginal itching as the gel can be applied internally or externally.
- Vagifem is available on prescription and is a small tablet-shaped pessary that contains a minute amount of oestrogen. It's non-systemic, meaning it's affecting the immediate area and not going into your general system. It's applied internally, reinvigorates the moisture and improves muscle tone. Must be used weekly/fortnightly. Use it or lose it!
- HRT can help but the generic prescriptions don't do very much for the vaginal area, in my opinion but ask for *testosterone* to be added and Oh, boy, does that make a difference! *I thought my libido had secured its place in history, never to be seen again and I was resigned to 'putting up with it'. Thank you, doctor! Changed my life!*
- Quality of Life - isn't that what it's all about? Don't suffer in silence!

## **VERTIGO, CLAUSTROPHOBIA**

### **Vertigo, Claustrophobia**

You may have experienced vertigo, in a mild form, after having children. The "no fear" of your youth disappears as you take on the responsibility of caring for your children. Looking over balconies, climbing trees (as you do!) no longer holds the same thrill.

#### ***Treatment***

- Seek professional help. Speak to your doctor about it. Phone him if you are too scared to leave your house.
- If you first experience either vertigo or claustrophobia in menopause ~ learn to understand your boundaries, but understand this is a psychological problem and can be helped with counselling.
- You will need to point out the menopause connection, GP's are very busy and don't always see the big picture.
- Like many of the psychological symptoms, avoid isolation, express your fears ~ they're not silly.

This is a very real problem and needs to be resolved for your own peace of mind and to achieve a better quality of life.

## **WEIGHT GAIN**

Your metabolism is now slowing down and your body will store food as fat rather than energy (as your cells have done previously) and this is why you can so easily put on weight without really thinking about it. Your shape will change to show a thicker middle, hips, thighs and upper arms. It's nature's way of protecting our bones in old age, from osteoporosis. The fat does not help increase bone density, however.

#### ***Treatment***

Help is at hand!

- Lifestyle Changes: Don't do anything drastic - perhaps go swimming 2 or 3 times a week, walking as often as you can – brisk walking. Don't overdo it, start small and work up. After a couple of months you will notice a change to your shape.

- ***Don't Diet*** ~ just change the way you eat, and do it gradually. Tell your family that the changes apply to them as well! A balanced diet consists of food that releases carbohydrates slowly, such as oats (porridge), brown pasta and sweet potatoes and other foods. This will prevent you from suffering dips in your blood sugar levels during the day. Check out [www.happyhormonesforlife.com](http://www.happyhormonesforlife.com). We love Nicky Williams. She's experienced diets that don't work and then studied nutrition.
- Try to avoid processed foods (cakes, biscuits, crisps, fast food, fizzy drinks, alcohol) and increase your intake of carbohydrates
- Reduce your salt intake, don't avoid altogether as we NEED salt for a balanced system. Increase activity and moderate alcohol intake.

Whatever you do, do it gradually, you are not doing yourself any favours if you rush off and diet ~ you'll just get depressed. Gradual re-training of the way you eat should ensure the weight stays off. Then you can enjoy yourself when you go shopping for a smaller dress size!

*You* and you alone are in a position to control the amount of weight you put on. If you only need to lose a few pounds, changing your lifestyle habits will achieve that.

If you are seeking to lose more than two stone in weight, then professional help should be sought. You cannot do this alone. You do need motivation and support. You also need to know more about nutrition and how to get into the habit of buying fresh foods and how to combine them into an interesting eating regime. Putting a few lettuce leaves on a plate is not the answer, either. Contact us for more information.

I'm sure all of this has provided a new insight into menopause for you and that you've benefited from it in many ways.

Good Luck with your Menopause Journey

Kind Regards

Kathryn Colas

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