

Menopause SOS

Is the change getting you hot under the collar? A few simple tweaks and you could be breezing it!

We're thrilled the menopause is finally shaking off its taboo and being discussed more openly in society, but there's a lot of information out there to sort through!

Here's what you need to know if you want to manage your menopause naturally.

STRESS LESS

You don't have to be in menopause yet to action this one – the years leading up to it are the best time to start. "During our childbearing years, the majority of the oestrogen we need is made by the ovaries, and the rest is made by the adrenal glands which sit on top of the kidneys," says medical herbalist Hannah Charman (physichealth.uk). "When we reach menopause, the ovaries' ability to make oestrogen slows down dramatically, and the adrenals do their best to pick up the slack. One problem with this is that with our busy modern lives, our adrenals are already working overtime, making stress hormones to keep us functioning under pressure. As a result, they can struggle with taking over oestrogen production. The more time we've spent dealing with chronic stress in the years leading up to menopause, the harder it can be for us to cope with menopause. So a good place to start is to make stress management a top priority."

HERBAL HELPERS

"Fermented soya contains phyto-sterols which work exactly like the main reproductive hormones oestrogen and progesterone. Herbs like black cohosh, wild yam, and vitex agnus castus contain phyto-sterols which can really ease the transition through menopause, but choosing the right herb for your needs can be difficult.

"Likewise, we need to make sure we process used hormones effectively, by supporting liver function with plants like artichoke, beetroot, and dandelion root, and the digestion with plenty of fibre and probiotics.

"Those whose libido has been affected by menopause could try the herb shatavari," she continues. "Its name in Ayurveda means 'she who has a hundred husbands' and it is an effective aphrodisiac,



available in various forms, which also supports the immune system.

"If the menopause is having a major impact on your life, speak to a medical herbalist. You can find your nearest one at nimh.org.uk/find-a-herbalist."

BLADDER PROBLEMS

"During the menopause, your fat mass can increase by 44 percent," says Stephanie Taylor, founder of Kegels8 (kegels8.co.uk). "This extra weight puts a lot of pressure on your pelvic floor muscles and your little leaks will likely turn into something bigger.

"One in three women leak urine every day – it is common, but it isn't normal. There are many things you can do: keep fit and maintain your weight – studies suggest you can have your leakage by losing just five percent of your weight. Reduce your intake of alcohol and fizzy drinks which irritate the bladder. Most importantly, exercise your pelvic floor muscles to keep your pelvic organs in place. Contact a women's health physiotherapist for support in strengthening your pelvic floor."


Hero helpers



A Vogel Menoforce Sage tablets, £13.99, avogel.co.uk



Feminesse Moisturiser, £9.99, feminesse.co.uk



*Are you making your
menopause worse?*

Any of these things could be causing your symptoms to escalate

- **Too many curries**

Hot foods with too many spices are known to exacerbate hot flushes, as they naturally raise the body's temperature.

- **A morning cuppa**

Caffeine is a trigger for many women. If you can, switch to a cooling herbal version – some women swear by iced peppermint tea to quell a hot flush.

- **Smoking**

Even just socially, smoking is a big no-no: studies show smokers experience more hot flushes than non-smokers, plus it adds to the increased cardiovascular risks of being post-menopausal.

- **Being overweight**

Weight loss becomes a harder battle as we age, but evidence suggests it can be helpful in reducing hot flushes.

- **Too many clothes**

Any slight increase in your body's temperature can trigger a flush. Dress in layers so you can remove them when you feel the heat.

- **That second glass of wine**

Yes, we agree, a cold, crisp glass of vino is a lovely way to relax in the evening, but alcohol can be a major trigger of flushes. Stick to one glass, at least four hours before bedtime to ensure your sleep isn't disrupted.

- **Not exercising**

Disrupted sleep and general hormonal fluctuations can leave you exhausted and wanting nothing more than to flake out on the couch, but evidence suggests exercise can really help with menopausal symptoms. Do it in a cool environment and try something like yoga which has been proven to lessen hot flushes.

4 AROMATHERAPY FIXES

Jo Kellett, Wellbeing Collective essential oil expert shares her hormonal balancing oil blends

Taking control of any situation can make you feel empowered. As more women look to support themselves naturally, the addition of a regular massage with the added benefit of essential oils may relieve some of those menopausal symptoms.

FIND BALANCE

Add 3 drops of geranium, 3 drops of clary Sage, and 4 drops of cypress to 20ml of blending oil. Massage over your abdomen and lower back every other night. Geranium is a tonic for the adrenal cortex which regulates the release of hormones, helping to maintain hormonal balance, while clary sage helps balance oestrogen levels and cypress regulates testosterone.

QUELL ANXIETY

Add a few drops of orange, geranium and nutmeg essential oil onto a pocket tissue and inhale at any moment to help bring a sense of calm.

BEATING THE BLUES

Add 2 to 3 drops of lemon tea tree, bergamot and nutmeg essential oil to your favourite vaporiser or diffuser to help promote positive thoughts and bring a little sunshine into your day.

REGULATE SLEEP

Add 2-3 drops of lavender essential oil to your vaporiser or diffuser to induce relaxation and a better night's sleep.