

Mythbusters - Menopause myths

The menopause is a topic that many of us will be familiar with. Whether you're currently going through it or know someone who is, it's often portrayed in a negative light.

This article is here to dispel menopause misconceptions, help highlight that those experiencing menopause can be in control of this time in their lives, and show them that they are not alone.

The menopause is just hot flushes

Definitely not true. While it's reported that 3 in 4¹ women will experience hot flushes, not every woman will experience the same symptoms, and every menopause journey is different.

Whilst hot flushes and night sweats are one of the symptoms more commonly associated with menopause, there are a whole range of other symptoms that can occur during this time. Other symptoms can include:

- headaches
- muscle aches and joint pain
- mood changes
- weight gain
- fatigue
- reduced sex drive.

With no set frequency or timeframe on how long hot flushes or night sweats may last, these symptoms can be difficult to cope with, but there are things you could do that might help.

Wearing lighter fabrics made of breathable material may help to keep you cool, and plant extracts like St John's Wort can help to ease these symptoms too. Please check with your GP before taking any herbal remedies, as some can react negatively with other medicines.

The menopause begins at 50

The average age for women in the UK to reach the menopause is 51², but this isn't set in stone. Some women may start experiencing menopausal symptoms sooner than this, and for others, it might be much later.

The menopause is deemed to have occurred when there has been an absence of periods for 12 months; this usually happens between the age of 45 and 55. After this time, a woman is considered post-menopausal for the rest of her life.

Where a woman reaches the menopause between the ages of 40 and 45, this is known as 'early menopause'.

Life will never be the same again

The menopause can be a difficult time in any woman's life, with physical, mental and emotional changes taking place, but you can be in control of your menopause journey.

There are various steps you could take to help you through the menopause and ease any symptoms you may experience.

Lifestyle and diet changes may help during this time, along with considering what medications or alternative therapies are available. Every woman will choose to manage their symptoms differently, and it's important to remember that what works for one woman may not work for another.

It's also good to remember there is support available, whether that's talking with friends and family or looking for support groups online or at work.

Life will never be the same again

With hormone levels rapidly changing during this time, it can cause a range of mental and emotional symptoms, as well as the physical ones.

Mood swings, anxiety, stress, low mood, and a lack of concentration are just a few examples. If you've ever heard of 'brain fog' then this is another symptom commonly associated with the menopause, where there's an increased tendency to forget and a decreased ability to concentrate and remain focused.

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) can be very helpful in managing these type of symptoms, alongside non HRT-based medication and/or alternative therapies (which can be an option for those women who can't or don't want to take HRT).

Asking for support isn't always easy, but it can be a powerful step in helping you to gain control of this time in your life and understand what your mind and body is currently going through.

PHC'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING SERVICES

If you need to be referred to a specialist by your GP for the treatment of menopausal symptoms, call us on **0800 068 7111** and we will check your cover.

We recommend referral to a specialist accredited by the British Menopause Society (BMS). Please ask your GP for an open referral and we can support you in finding a BMS specialist, either nearby, or one who commonly offers online appointments.

Counselling and support service

If you're facing challenges that seem too much to cope with, our Counselling and support service, including Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), gives you an expert to talk to over the phone or online, 24/7. You can get confidential guidance and support as well as access to short-term counselling (where clinically appropriate). With everything you need in one place, get the right support to move forward on your wellbeing journey, anytime, anywhere.

This service is available to members aged 16 and over.

How to access

To speak to somebody

Call PHC's dedicated Counselling and support service on **0800 316 1213**. Please state that you are a PHC member when you call.

To access the online portal

Visit axabesupported.co.uk and register by entering your email address, followed by selecting a password. Once you have registered you will be asked to add your first name, surname and access code, Phc. Please note the access code is case sensitive.

If you have previously registered for the site, your login details will remain the same. If you have forgotten your password, select the forgotten password link.

Fitness offers

Are you finding it difficult to commit to the gym? Do you struggle with finding time to work out? Everyone's route to better health and fitness is different.

You and your partner or spouse will receive a 40% discount on a variety of health and wellbeing facilities such as spas, gyms, and more, via Hussle and Nuffield Health (terms and conditions apply).

How to access

To redeem or to see the latest offers, visit thephc.co.uk/gym-discount/

