

Menopause, mental health, *and me*

Mental
Health
UK

**Supporting your partner through
perimenopause and menopause**





Supporting your partner through perimenopause and menopause



For partners of people experiencing menopause and perimenopause, it can sometimes be a confusing and difficult time. No matter how empathetic a partner is, they may not be aware of the specific changes that happen when someone experiences menopause.

Perimenopause is the transition leading up to menopause, when hormone levels change and periods become irregular. Menopause is defined as 12 months without a period and can cause symptoms such as hot flushes, sleep problems, low mood and brain fog. As there is no routine test, diagnosis is usually based on symptoms, age and menstrual history and anyone who has a period can experience perimenopause or menopause.

A good starting point for a partner is understanding what is happening and why these changes can have

such a huge impact on someone experiencing menopause, both physically and mentally. It is important to research using reliable sources such as the NHS, and to talk to your partner to find out how it is affecting them, and how it is affecting you both. It is also important to recognise that people may experience menopause differently. For some it might be quite a difficult experience and for others it can be a neutral or welcome natural life change. Not attaching stigma or shame to menopause is an important part of supporting people through it if they need.

Top tips for supporting your partner

1. Take menopause seriously, try not to be dismissive
2. Research and understand what is happening and what the symptoms could be
3. Talk to your partner, ask how you can help
4. Be positive and supporting, avoiding negative comments
5. Don't make them feel helpless, but help where you can
6. Be understanding of a need for different room temperatures to normal
7. Offer to massage sore muscles
8. Don't make fun of bladder leaks or other physical symptoms
9. Try not to take intimacy rejections personally, be understanding and patient
10. Make sure that proper medical advice is sought where needed
11. Offer to visit the GP with them if they would like
12. If they are in danger of self-harm, seek immediate professional support from the NHS
13. Ask for help if you need it too



Talking about menopause with your partner

If you recognise symptoms of menopause in your partner, they may wish to receive advice. If they do, you could support them in seeking advice especially if they have not considered that menopause or perimenopause could be the cause of any symptoms they might be experiencing. This can help ensure that the person experiencing menopause reaches this decision out of their own choice. Support should always reflect your partner's choices, boundaries and autonomy. Menopause can occur within relationships that do not feel safe or supportive. In this case you and your partner may need different sources of help and support.

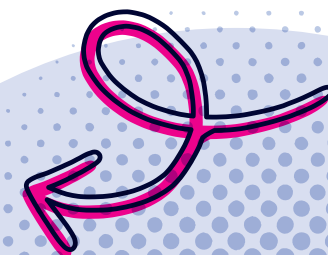
Menopause and mental health

The impact of menopause on mental health is well documented, so managing both the physical symptoms and addressing the emotional impact are essential. Decreasing levels of oestrogen and progesterone during menopause can lead to mental health symptoms such as increased stress, anxiety,

and fear. Mood changes, depression and difficulty concentrating are common symptoms. If your partner has existing mental health conditions or a diagnosed mental illness, then menopause may increase their symptoms, and may increase their need for support. Everyone experiences menopause differently, and it can affect their mental wellbeing in different ways. You may notice changes in your partner and may recognise changes that are out of character or worrying.

Menopause and physical health

Your partner may experience physical symptoms that may impact their wellbeing – changes in weight, thinning hair, and poor sleep are just some of the symptoms that can negatively impact mental health. Understanding that your partner may not feel their best and focusing on the positives and being patient and supportive are essential to help your partner through this.



Intimacy and relationships

Some of the physical symptoms of menopause may impact a person's desire for intimacy. This could be due to many factors, such as discomfort caused by vaginal dryness, or a lack of self-esteem during the sometimes-rapid changes in hormone levels experienced during this time.

It is important to always practice consent during intimacy regardless of any physical or emotional changes that may impact a person's desire for intimacy.

These changes in hormone levels could be heightened if the person is trans, intersex or non-binary if they are on hormone medications already. Remember that any reduced interest in intimacy is not a rejection of you, it's a way of coping with complex physical and emotional changes. Remember to be patient, kind, and supportive with positive encouragement and open communication.

Supporting your partner through perimenopause and menopause

Menopause most often starts between 40 and 50; however, it can also start much earlier in life for some and can also be caused by surgery or medical treatment.

If your partner thinks menopause is a possible cause of their physical or emotional challenges, support them by going with them to GP appointments. You can also support them in other ways, such as emotional support, household responsibilities or caring responsibilities, whilst also looking after your own wellbeing. However, make sure to have open and honest conversations about what support is needed so your partner can make their own choices around this.

If at any time your partner says that they may harm themselves, seek immediate support by contacting your GP or the NHS by dialling 111. If you fear such harm is imminent,

then seek urgent help; dial 999 or go directly to your nearest hospital. There are further resources on our website here: [mentalhealth-uk.org/help-and-information/downloadable-resources](https://www.mentalhealth-uk.org/help-and-information/downloadable-resources)

The most important thing you can do to support your partner is reflecting on how you can help.

Try to avoid negative comments such as noticing weight gain and instead, support them with their physical symptoms. For example, a common symptom of menopause is experiencing hot flushes; you can support them by being flexible about them altering room temperatures

and finding other ways to help them feel more comfortable. Support in the ways that matter to you both. Do not make them feel as if they cannot do anything and 'take over', make sure to protect their sense of choice. They will tell you how best you can support them by listening and communicating.

Menopause is a transitional experience, so it may take many years for the hormonal cycle changes to complete, but support through the time, with appropriate medical interventions when needed, will make the journey easier for you and your partner.





Who we are

We champion the UK's mental health. We challenge the systems and situations that hold people back, and equip them with tools and advice to unlock their full potential.

Support us

We are thankful to all our supporters who make it possible for us to continue providing vital advice, information, and support to people who need it all over the UK.

Your support could help us give more people the tools they need to manage their mental health and live their best lives. **Donate now at mentalhealth-uk.org/donate**



Find out more

mentalhealth-uk.org/menopause

