

EVELYN MEDICAL CENTRE: MENOPAUSE & HRT INFORMATION LEAFLET¹

Women generally become menopausal between 45 and 55 years of age. You are defined as menopausal if you are 45 years or over and not had a period for 2 years (or 1 year over 50 years) or you have had your uterus and ovaries removed. Under 45 years of age to understand if a woman is menopausal blood tests are needed.

The average duration of the peri-menopause and subsequent menopause is between 4-7 years, but for some women it lasts up to 12 years. The peri-menopause is the time leading up to the menopause when flushes can start.

Many women experience the transition to menopause without needing support: it is not inevitable that you will need medical attention or medication during this period of your life.

HRT can be really helpful for women who experience flushing and night sweats 'vasomotor symptoms' which affect their daily activities. Vasomotor symptoms can be overwhelming leading to poor sleep and consequently difficulty with concentration, word finding, relationships and work.

Defining the risks of HRT is complex due to the varied nature of HRT products and a woman's own health profile. Vaginal oestrogen creams and moisturisers are not thought to have any long term health risks. All other HRT medications increase a woman's risk of breast and endometrial cancer. Patches, gels, mirena coils and body identical progesterone (utrogestan) are thought to be safest and do not increase the risk of blood clots. However, more traditional HRT tablets can increase risk of blood clots and stroke in older women.

The balance of benefits of HRT against the risks to you should be carefully discussed with your doctor or pharmacist at each appointment. Women should have regular follow up appointments initially at 3 months after starting or changing HRT product and then 6-12 monthly thereafter. Health risks of HRT increase with length of use and a woman's age. At EMC we generally will encourage women to stop HRT by the age of 60 years due to balance of risks.

The current NICE Guidelines state that we should be 'Prescribing the lowest (HRT) dose for the shortest possible duration'. HRT can be stopped gradually to minimise recurrence of symptoms.

There is evidence that stopping smoking, having a normal body mass index (weight to height ratio) and a healthy diet all help with the symptoms of menopause. There is also evidence that alcohol, caffeine and inactivity make the symptoms of menopause worse.

¹ EMC Menopause & HRT Info Leaflet Short V1 June 2022; Update due June 2023

Where can I get more information about HRT and the menopause?

We hope the information in this short leaflet has been helpful but we are aware that this is a complex area and you may wish to read more detail about on the following websites and/or please ask a member of the EMC team for the 'long' version of this leaflet:

- British Menopause Society: Thebms.org.uk
- Bridgewater Community Health Care Trust:
<http://www.bridgewater.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/The-Menopause-what-to-expect-when-you-are-expecting-the-menopause.pdf>
- Comprehensive Table showing Risks of HRT:
<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d680409e5274a1711fbe65a/Table1.pdf>
- Risks of HRT and Breast Cancer:
<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d68d0e340f0b607c6dcb697/HRT-patient-sheet-3008.pdf>
- NICE guidelines: <https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/menopause/management/>
- Swings and Roundabouts: <http://www.menopauseswings.org/>
- Rock My Menopause website (www.rockmymenopause.com) has a variety of factsheets and podcasts on various aspects of menopause.
https://rockmymenopause.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/RMM_HRT-in-a-nutshell.pdf
- Menopause Matters (www.menopausematters.co.uk) provides information on the menopause, menopausal symptoms, and treatment options.
- Women's Health Concern (the patient arm of the British Menopause Society, website available at www.womens-health-concern.org) has a range of factsheets and an email advice service.
- The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (www.rcog.org.uk) has various patient leaflets in the section on [Menopause and women's health in later life](#).
- The Daisy Network (www.daisynetwork.org) is a nationwide support group for women diagnosed with premature ovarian insufficiency or premature menopause.
- The NHS leaflet: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/treatment/>
- Relate: <https://www.relate.org.uk/relationship-help/help-relationships/feeling-unsatisfied-your-relationship/menopause-affecting-our-relationship-how-do-i-talk-my-partner>
- Books: Me and my menopausal vagina by Jane Lewis; The Vagina Bible by Jen Gunter
- Video by Kat Love, Chinese Acupuncturist, The Treatment Space Bamford:
https://youtu.be/SJVjPBQ_32A

Thank you for taking the time to read this leaflet and wishing you all the best with your journey through the menopause.

Space for you to write any thoughts or questions to prepare for your Consultation...