

ABC life support

First aid training for all

Menopause Survey

Autumn 2021

The highlights

We were overwhelmed with the response we had to this survey.

We wanted to understand how the Menopause truly affects women from a personal and informative way, to be able to share this information is a privilege and it will hopefully help others.

Those who completed this survey have found being able to share and express the symptoms and difficulties during this change in life can bring has been cathartic. One comment which really struck us was that someone had not realised what they were feeling was part of the perimenopause. In a small way we have helped already.

The coverage in the media during Menopause Awareness Month has captured the attention of many women, this awareness and further understanding cannot come soon enough. Thank you, Davina and gang, you are doing a sterling job, let us hope it does not take another year for menopause legislation and work-based learning to make an impact.

The impact of this life change cannot be underestimated, the honest and enlightening responses we have had enforces the need for ongoing dialogue and a wider discussion.

Qu 1. How are you feeling today?

A simple yet effective question and a great way to get a snapshot of feelings. This word cloud highlights the key words that came from this question, with tiredness being the most prominent with 36% of responses mentioning weariness, fatigue and being worn out.



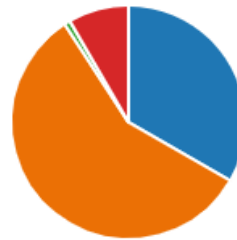
When asked, the same number of women said they were ok as said they were tired. - What does fatigue really feel like? I am sure many women would say they have been tired for decades; how do we differentiate from the weariness of life and deep-seated fatigue.

Symptoms of fatigue

- chronic tiredness or sleepiness.
- headache.
- dizziness.
- sore or aching muscles.
- muscle weakness.
- slowed reflexes and responses.
- impaired decision-making and judgement.
- moodiness, such as irritability.

Qu 2. Do you think you are menopausal or peri-menopausal?

● Menopausal	40
● Peri-menopausal	69
● Not yet	1
● I've been there already	10



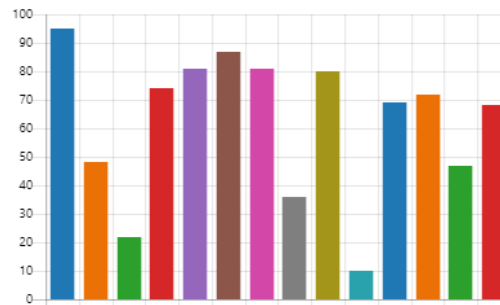
Qu 3. If you think you are "in the zone", what symptoms have you had so far?

We were interested to see that fatigue was mentioned as a symptom more than hot flushes. While both are of equal prevalence, the knowledge around fatigue being a symptom does appear to be lacking.

Sleeplessness is the second highest symptom to be noted. How does this tie in with fatigue, could one be driving the other?

We have all lived through a very anxious 2 years. Anxiety can be debilitating and cannot be underestimated especially during our 40's and 50's as our children are growing up and leaving home, parents may become unwell and needing more care. It is a tough time which is compounded by the change and fluctuation in hormones.

● Fatigue	95
● Itchiness	48
● Hair loss	22
● Hot flushes	74
● Anxiety	81
● Sleeplessness	87
● Mood swings	81
● Depression	36
● Memory lapses	80
● Recurrent UTI's	10
● Night sweats	69
● Difficulty concentrating	72
● Headaches	47
● Aching joints	68



Is there a lack of understanding of the other symptoms of menopause and perimenopause which can creep in before you realise that is what is happening. Do we drift into the perimenopause without realising we have the symptoms?

As our bodies change, it appears than many women suffer from a wide range of traits including a lack of confidence, struggling to concentrate, anxiety and brain fog. A number of those who responded to the survey sited these as quite debilitating so much so it made them question their mind set and wellbeing. If we know the other indicators of menopause and perimenopause, would we be more prepared?

The longer question is to look at how these symptoms impact on your working life? Is your company menopause sensitive? Are you familiar with the legislation related to menopause?

Qu 4. How do you feel you are dealing with your menopause?

34% of those who responded were really struggling with their menopause, many sited difficulties managing the symptoms.

On a more positive note, 45% of those who responded to say they felt they were dealing with their menopause positively.

It is fair to say that HRT has made a huge positive impact on their lives with 33% of those who responded positively said that HRT had improved their symptoms.

Qu 5. Do you have any tips on how you've coped so far.

We asked what has worked for them so far and the answers are a gold mine of information.

By far the biggest help was talking to friends, colleagues and family members. Telling people how you are feeling, how it is affecting you and sharing knowledge is so powerful. People mentioned that feeling like you are not alone and talking about the different symptoms can be reassuring.

Exercise was also a big favourite which coupled with fresh air and eating a healthy diet can help with symptoms, mindset and wellbeing. Reducing alcohol was mentioned by a large number of those who responded, especially as a to improving sleep. Also cutting back on sugar and caffeine was suggested as a way to alleviate the symptoms.

Sleep and rest. When we asked in Question 3, fatigue was one of the most common symptoms. This can be debilitating but to take time to sleep, rest, recuperate can help through this.

Many of those who responded cited using herbal remedies to be a huge benefit. Those that were mentioned the most were Vitamin D, Turmeric, Magnesium, Red Clover, Reishi mushroom supplements, Vitamin B6, Sage tablets and Evening Primrose Oil.

One area which came up in more than one response is to be kind to yourself, accept it is happening and take time to process the changes. While the symptoms are tough to deal with, the process of change is part of life much like adolescence.

There has been much in the press about HRT, whether you are for it or against it, those who have taken it have raved about how it has changed their life and made the symptoms much easier to manage. Some respondents were very anti HRT, it is after all personal choice. If you are able to see your doctor to discuss this choice and then decide whether this is right for you.

When it comes to helping yourself through the hot flushes it was suggested to wear layered clothing and to carry a fan to help cool you down.

“Don't worry about the symptoms but make sure that as many people as possible understand them.”

“Accept it's happening. Not fearing change.”

Qu 6. If you could say one thing to your younger self, what would you say?

“You are capable and no you are not going mad. Be kind.”

“Embrace it, celebrate being a woman and what I have previously achieved.”

“Calm. Communicate. Be patient.”

“Pelvic floor exercises are so important, do them early!”

“Enjoy your body as it is, it's an amazing machine.”

“Seek help and support when you need it, don't suffer in silence. There are many more women who feel exactly the same so there's nothing to be ashamed of!”

Qu 7. How old are you?

Age ranges of those who responded are.....

Under 40	3%
41-45	17%
46-50	38%
51-55	30%
56+	12%

Qu 8. When did your symptoms start?

Under 40	10%
40-45	37%
46-50	34%
51+	19%

Qu 9. How has your menopause affected your day-to-day life?

This was quite a revealing question with many of the symptoms mentioned tying in with the earlier questions. Many women said they are really struggling with a lack of self-confidence due to changes in appearance and ability to work. Forgetfulness, the feeling of not coping, struggles to be organised, and increased anxiety has led to concerns at work and how to manage the challenges of life. While many referred to tiredness and the challenges of insomnia and broken sleep which can be debilitating. The physical changes have also affected greatly, from severe migraines, extreme hot flushes, aching limbs, hair loss to weight gain and particularly vaginal dryness which can be hard to process and find relief from. A loss in sex drive and desire is also one area which is close to the hearts of many. Dealing with family, work, friends, and day to day life whilst also managing such an array of symptoms does have a profound effect on wellbeing. The impact of these symptoms is not to be underestimated.

Qu 10. Where do you look for advice on the menopause? Are there any particular places you search?

From the comments supplied while many found their doctors helpful, there does seem to be a gap in the information and knowledge provided within the NHS. It was suggested by many of those who responded that they had to return to the Doctors on multiple occasions to get the help they needed.

The internet has great amount of information from both the medical profession and more wider coaches and therapists. The use of online forums, social media groups and support via private groups has a significant following. With the growth of menopause doctors and coaches, many women can find ongoing support via social media. Facebook groups are a great solace for information and light relief!



Conclusion

Thank you to everyone who responded to our survey, we really appreciate your input, and your responses were beautifully honest and so very helpful. What has really come across in the comments is that there is a need to talk about the menopause more, not just for a month but always. To understand this process is not just for women but for men to engage and empathise with too. While there was a great deal of worry, misunderstanding, lack of knowledge and in some cases anxiety and fear, this is part of our lives and by making the subject more open we can dispel the myths and find the help, support and strategies to make this part of who we are not just a bag of symptoms.

To start to reach out and educate women before they reach their 40's, understanding the symptoms before they kick in will help your wellbeing and understanding of the perimenopause would turn this part of our lives around. Could this be something that could be covered at the 40-year-old check-up? Having the knowledge of the symptom will take away the fear and confusion which is felt by many.

There are a wide range of resources out there, from Facebook forums to websites and Menopause specialists. The NHS is wonderful on so many levels however there does seem to be some catching up to do when it comes to the menopause. A wider understanding from clinical professionals on the wide range of symptoms and the impact on the wellbeing of those women is crucial in the next steps. Let's hope when we get to menopause awareness month next year, we have a more positive view of the advice women have gained from their doctors.

One area we are looking to explore in the future is how employers are developing strategy to ensure women going through the menopause are understood, encouraged and listened to. Watch this space for further research.

While reading many of the comments was harrowing at times, this survey has been enlightening, thought provoking and so very interesting. It felt like many of those who responded found this to be an outlet and a way of processing their thoughts and understanding of this. It also came across that the mental impact of these changes did outweigh the physical symptoms. The anxiety, difficulty in concentration, memory lapses and mood swings were all mentioned throughout the survey. While hot flushes are still the more relatable symptom, this is often preceded by other less well-known symptoms.