

FACT SHEET

PERIMENOPAUSE & MANAGING STRESS

Many of the symptoms of perimenopause overlap with the symptoms of chronic stress and even burnout, so it can be difficult to tease out the root cause of the symptoms.



Midlife Stressors

For individuals* in their middle years, whether internally driven by hormonal shifts or externally by life transitions, stress can exacerbate symptoms such as vasomotor disturbances (e.g., hot flashes, night sweats), sleep difficulties, mood changes, and cognitive issues like memory and concentration and impact the ways these symptoms are perceived (1).

In addition, stress is intricately associated with depression, cardiovascular disease, cancer, metabolic syndrome, mild cognitive impairment (MCI) in later life, dementia, Alzheimer's disease, and biological aging.



A Powerful Rite of Passage

It is vital to counteract societal stereotypes regarding aging and encourage discussions on the

positive aspects of entering a post-menopausal phase. Framing menopause as a natural phase in life rather than pathologizing it is crucial, and viewing the menopausal transition as a period that can bring liberation, adaptability, and empowerment is part of this approach.

The perimenopause transition is most accurately viewed as one of several critical biopsychosocial life transitions, similar to the significant shifts of puberty and pregnancy to postpartum (2) and as such demands space to allow for the mess and the magic of transformation as we step into a new phase of life. If not before, it may be high time that we counteract traditional role expectations where the great weight of thinking, planning, organising and remembering for the entire family regularly falls on women.

Education and Empowerment

Several studies show the empowerment of menopausal individuals through education programs and social support networks contributes to their health during the menopause

health during the menopause transition and throughout the last third of their life (3). When people know more about the temporary nature of symptoms and the specific interventions they can apply to manage stress from both life and menopausal symptoms, their experience is positively impacted (1).



Lifestyle Supports

Engaging in regular physical activities like aerobic exercises, yoga, and strength training can improve overall well-being, build muscle, and help manage stress plus positively impact chronic disease risk.

Prioritising sleep by developing good sleep hygiene habits and self-care including relaxation tools like meditation, deep-breathing exercises, and positive affirmations can contribute to managing stress.



Emotional and Social Supports

From a social/cultural perspective, many of the difficulties of this transition are rooted in the social position of women*, rather than the transition itself and offer an opportunity to bring into focus unsustainable or unrealistic expectations from ourselves and others.

Rather than try to manage the many potential symptoms of perimenopause in isolation, try building a support network from family, friends or community to give and receive support from others.



Psychological Supports

The psychological themes that emerge consistently from all individuals in the menopause transition are those centred around body and emotions, loss and grief, identity and autonomy, values and purpose and the question of how they want to move forward into their next phase of life (4).

After perhaps decades of focusing on external pursuits and the care of others, perimenopause offers a perfectly timed invitation. One that invites, or perhaps forces us, to review Internal patterns of behaviour that cost our autonomy, our well-being and our peace of mind. Patterns like people pleasing, playing the good girl or

the “everyone before me” caretaker role are no longer sustainable or tenable in midlife.

This time of life can bring significant shifts of an emotional and psychological nature, particularly if mental health issues, eating disorders or body image issues and trauma either re-emerge or occur for the first time. These shifts have the potential to cause great levels of psychological distress.

Menopause-informed mental health professionals work with people experiencing a wide range of ‘distress’ as well as those who wouldn’t describe themselves as ‘distressed’ but who want an avenue to explore the shifts they are experiencing. Psychologists can help using a wide range of frameworks and tools such as Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) (5,6), Acceptance Commitment Therapy (ACT) (7) body-brain tools including EMDR and somatic psychotherapy and psycho-education been proven very helpful (8) depending on what the individual is needing and wanting.



Medical Supports

Some individuals find that using Hormone Therapy (HT) dials down physical menopausal symptoms and may offer relief from mood, stress resilience and issues with anxiety or depression.

Each individual's experience will be unique and support is likely to involve a layered approach, which could include lifestyle, professional mental health, medical, alternative and self care strategies.

It is important to seek assistance from a menopause-informed mental health or medical professional for individually crafted support if your ability to deal with stress is impacting your ability to function or enjoy life.



All About Her Centre for Menopause is a collective of health professionals for Australian women whose lives are impacted by menopause, and education and training for the psychologists and health professionals who support them.

We exist to ensure that perimenopausal, menopausal and postmenopausal women feel understood, seen and supported at every step along the way.

Find out more at www.allabouthercentre.com.au

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*All About Her - The Centre for Menopause acknowledges that all people born with ovaries and who live long enough will experience the menopause transition. This includes cisgender women, transgender men, non-binary individuals, and any other individual with ovaries. We use the terms individuals/people to be inclusive of the many who do not identify as women, but who will nonetheless experience this significant life stage.

Disclaimer: The information presented is for general understanding only and should not substitute professional medical advice. If you are concerned about your health, talk to your doctor or healthcare team for personalised guidance.

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