

➔ CONSIDERATIONS WHEN SUPPORTING A PERSON LIVING WITH DIABETES THROUGH THE MENOPAUSE



What is the menopause?

Perimenopause usually starts after age 40, when periods become irregular—sometimes heavier and more frequent, or lighter and less predictable. This happens when oestrogen, progesterone, and testosterone levels drop. Menopause is defined as 12 months or more without having a period.



What are the symptoms of menopause?

Menopause can cause physical and emotional symptoms that vary in intensity and duration, including:

- Hot flushes and night sweats
- Depression
- Vaginal dryness/pain during sex
- Feeling anxious
- Weight gain
- Sleep disturbance
- Loss of confidence
- Loss of libido
- Tiredness
- Changes in emotions
- Burning mouth syndrome
- Forgetfulness
- Urinary and vaginal infections
- Palpitations



Top tip: Some symptoms of menopause can feel like low blood sugar. Vaginal dryness is common, and high blood sugar over time can harm vaginal nerves, affecting arousal and pleasure.



How does the menopause impact diabetes?

- Living with diabetes and going through the menopause can be very challenging.
- Perimenopausal changes can affect insulin response, making blood glucose management more difficult.
- Weight gain and reduced progesterone levels can increase insulin resistance and blood pressure.
- Declining hormones and having diabetes raises the risks of heart disease and bone fractures.

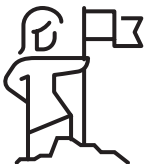
Top tip: Consider reviewing QRISK in women living with type 2 diabetes.



How to manage the menopause?

- If menopausal symptoms affect quality of life, hormone replacement therapy (HRT) may be beneficial.
- Certain types of HRT may not be suitable for women with a history of breast, ovarian, or uterine cancer.
- There are different forms of HRT including tablets, patches, gels and a vaginal ring.
- Local oestrogen can help with vaginal symptoms, and lubricants can improve comfort during sex.

Top tip: It is recommended to use the lowest effective dose of HRT for the shortest duration.



How to best manage diabetes?

- Keep physically active
- Review diabetes treatments
- Stop smoking
- Eat a healthy diet (consider support from a dietitian)
- Get enough calcium and vitamin D
- Consider the use of diabetes technology
- Advocate for peer support (e.g. Menopause Mithers)
- Reduce caffeine and alcohol intake

Top tip: Consider the words and phrases used. Please see NHS Language Matters for guidance.

References: Diabetes UK. Menopause and Diabetes; Trend Diabetes (2021). Diabetes and the Menopause.

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