

# PERIMENOPAUSE

## SOLVING THE MYSTERY

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**Y**ou are in your 30s or 40s, sleep is disrupted, periods are erratic, you can't remember names and the littlest things have started upsetting you...

Does this sound familiar? Chances are you could be going through perimenopause. This is the time leading up to menopause, where the hormones oestrogen, progesterone and testosterone start to fluctuate. At this stage, your periods may still even be normal, but you start to notice unfamiliar changes to your body. In fact, did you know, menopause symptoms can begin years before your last ever period.

'Hot flushes are NOT the most common symptom'. Initially symptoms may be vague or subtle, and you may not make the connection - muscle aches, skin crawling, palpitations, mood changes, insomnia, vaginal pain, weight gain, hair loss, lack of libido. These are just some of the commonly misdiagnosed symptoms, with women offered treatments such as antidepressants instead of hormone replacement.

Some women sail through this important chapter. Sadly, for others, it can have huge negative impact on quality of life and even be the cause of relationship and career breakdowns.

Patients often describe to me the fear of feeling 'loss of control' and by the time they seek help, they are physically and mentally drained. When symptoms are so vague, making the diagnosis is not always straightforward. However, it is in these situations that we should be seriously considering perimenopause as a cause for puzzling or unresolved symptoms.

You do not usually need blood tests to make a diagnosis and you may find tracking your symptoms in a diary can help you and your doctor pinpoint emerging patterns.

### **What treatments are available?**

Did you know, you don't need to wait for your periods to stop to begin treatment. Treatments include physical and psychotherapies, non-hormonal medications, and hormone replacement therapy (HRT), which remains the most effective treatment for menopause symptoms and has a wealth of benefits including protection against osteoporosis and heart disease. Menopause is not a 'one size fits all' and treatment should be tailored to your individual needs. Speak with your doctor, as they can help guide you through options that are safe and right for you. Take care of your self

It can be tricky if you're trying to navigate a busy lifestyle, all whilst battling debilitating symptoms. But with proper support, healthy lifestyle practices can help improve mental and physical well-being during menopause and the years to follow. Reducing alcohol and caffeine consumption, prioritising sleep, a balanced diet, regular exercise, and not smoking can all be beneficial.

By raising awareness, I hope women can get the right support they need to navigate through what can be an overwhelming chapter in their life. Let me reassure you, you are not alone!

Contact Dr Shilpa McQuillan via email on [info@berkshiremenopauseclinic.com](mailto:info@berkshiremenopauseclinic.com) or visit [www.berkshiremenopauseclinic.com](http://www.berkshiremenopauseclinic.com) for lots of patient resources.

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