

# Vhi Menopause Supports



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As difficult as perimenopause, menopause and postmenopause can be, you can still find a way to deal with the challenges by working with your GP to manage symptoms as they arise. Remember to look at what else is going on in your life, as stress and life changes can also contribute to what you are experiencing.

This guide aims to answer any questions you may have around symptoms of oestrogen deficiency and the supports available from Vhi Healthcare. Dr. Ui May Tan, Vhi Health and Wellbeing Clinical Lead will also share some of her tips for dealing with menopause.

If you would like more information about your policy and the range of benefits and services available to you, please call the **Vhi Corporate Advice Line on 056 777 5800** or your **Vhi Corporate Concierge Line**.





# FAQ

## I've heard about perimenopause and menopause, what's the difference?

- + Perimenopause is the transition period which precedes menopause. It can start in your 30s or 40s. On average it can last up to 4 years, but it does affect everyone differently.
- + Menopause occurs when you experience 12 months without your period. It can occur naturally or may be brought on by surgery, infections that affect your ovaries or certain medical treatments.

## What are the most common symptoms?

- + Irregular periods
- + Hot flushes
- + Night sweats
- + Sleep disturbances
- + Depression and other mood problems including anxiety
- + Memory and concentration difficulty
- + Issues with urinary control
- + Vaginal dryness
- + Loss of libido
- + Weight gain
- + Bone density and loss of muscle

## What should I do if I have some of these symptoms?

You should book an appointment to visit your GP.

## What can I expect when I visit my GP?

Your GP will go through your medical history and may carry out examinations and blood tests. They will then assess whether further investigations or procedures are required. They may recommend treatments/lifestyle changes which are specific to you.

## What cover will Vhi provide?

Depending on your hospital plan, Vhi provides cover towards a range of benefits including:

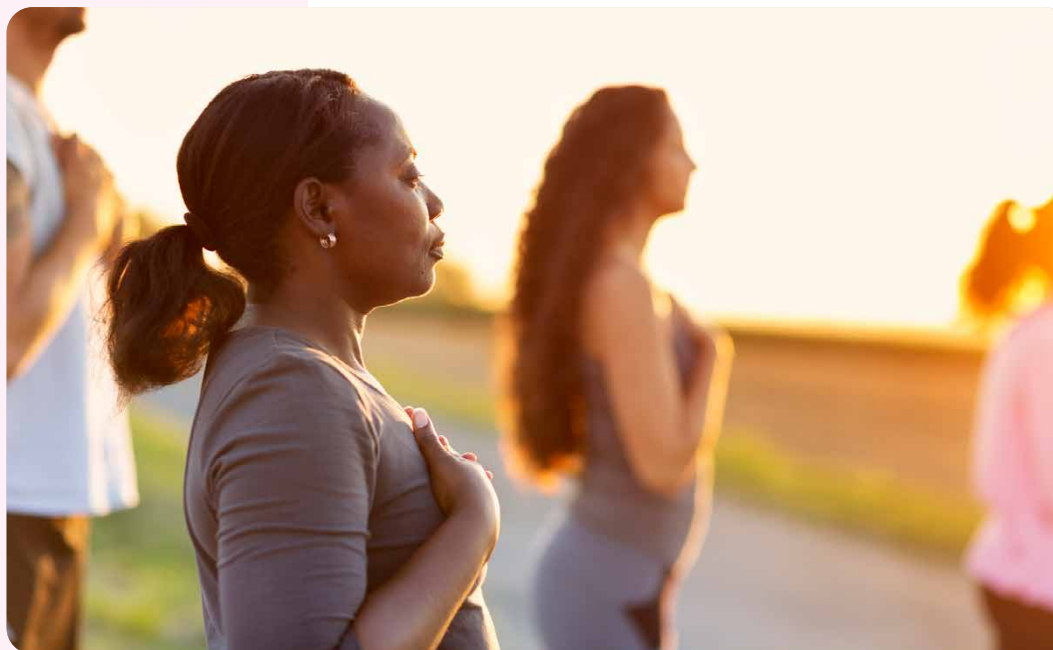
- + Initial and follow on consultations with your GP/consultant
- + Blood tests
- + Insertion/removal of Mirena coil
- + Day case procedures
- + Dietician
- + Acupuncture and reflexology
- + Counselling, CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy) and psychotherapy
- + Women's Health Clinic at our Vhi 360 Health Centre, Carrickmines

## What other menopause supports are available to me from Vhi?

- + Vhi Online Doctor
- + Vhi NurseLine 24/7
- + Integrative medicine consultation
- + Vhi Symptom Checker



# Key tips for dealing with menopause



Your lifestyle can play a key role in tackling the symptoms of menopause. Here are some key tips from Dr. Ui May Tan, Vhi Health and Wellbeing Clinical Lead.

## Hot flushes and night sweats

- + Reduce stress and anxiety levels which may contribute to higher occurrences of hot flushes.
- + Maintaining a healthy weight is advisable.
- + Wear clothing that is lightweight and loosely woven.
- + Dress in layers, so that you can shed a jacket or jumper if you have a hot flush.
- + Try to keep your bedroom at night as cool as possible.
- + Use lightweight sheets and blankets.
- + If you notice particular triggers, such as hot beverages or spicy foods, avoid consuming them.
- + Your GP may recommend medication.





## Sleep difficulties

- + Try to practice good sleep hygiene by going to bed and waking up at the same time every day (even on weekends). This will allow your body to get used to a regular sleep-and-wake rhythm. Reduce your intake of coffee, tea, and other caffeinated beverages after lunch; these stimulants linger in the body long after you drink them.
- + Avoid alcohol right before you go to sleep. Although alcohol initially acts as a sedative, the body's metabolism of alcohol produces a stimulant that can disrupt sleep.
- + Put down your smart phone or other electrical devices at least half an hour before bedtime; blue light can interfere with your body's natural sleep/wake cycle.
- + Build physical activity into your day, as this can help you sleep at night.

## If you're still struggling to get a good night's sleep, the below behavioural therapies may work for you:

- + Relaxation therapy focuses on progressively relaxing muscles from your head to your toes. You may find mindfulness apps such as Calm or Headspace beneficial.
- + Sleep restriction therapy involves reducing the time you spend in bed by going to bed later. The goal is to shorten the amount of time spent awake in bed, in order to encourage better sleep. Once you sleep through the night on a regular basis, you can slowly move towards an earlier bedtime and increase the time you spend in bed.
- + Stimulus control therapy aims to condition your mind to associate your bedroom with sleep. Try to use your bedroom only for sleep or sex, not for catching up on bills or answering emails on your laptop. And if you are unable to fall asleep after 20 minutes or so, get up and sit in another room until you feel sleepy, then go back to bed.
- + Sleep medications should be used as a short term solution and should be recommended by your GP.

## Managing your mood

If you find you are anxious or depressed or have other concerns with your mood, talk with your GP about options available to you. There are two approaches which may be recommended, however sometimes a combination of the two may work best for you:

- + Antidepressant medication which usually takes 4-6 weeks to work.
- + Therapies such as psychotherapy, cognitive behavioural therapy, interpersonal therapy and psychodynamic therapy

If you have an EAP (Employee Assistance Programme) at work this may help you to address your concerns contributing to your stress or anxiety levels.

## Exercise

Lifting weights not only makes your muscles stronger but also makes bones less fragile. And don't forget balance exercises such as yoga and tai chi will reduce stress and improve fitness and mood.

## Managing bladder issues

Kegel exercise is useful to help control bladder leakage.

## Coping with vaginal dryness

Use vaginal lubricants, moisturiser and vaginal oestrogen. Some vaginal oestrogen products can help with hot flush symptoms as well.







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