



Let's talk
about
menopause
and cancer



National Cancer
Control Programme

Do you experience any of these menopause symptoms?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Allergies	<input type="checkbox"/>	Anxiety and depression
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bloating	<input type="checkbox"/>	Brain fog
	Breast pain	<input type="checkbox"/>	Brittle nails
<input type="checkbox"/>	Burning mouth	<input type="checkbox"/>	Changes in body odour
<input type="checkbox"/>	Difficulty concentrating	<input type="checkbox"/>	Digestive problems
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dizziness	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dry and itchy skin
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fatigue	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gum problems
<input type="checkbox"/>	Headaches and migraines	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hair loss
	Hot flashes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Insomnia
<input type="checkbox"/>	Irregular heartbeat	<input type="checkbox"/>	Irregular periods
<input type="checkbox"/>	Irritability	<input type="checkbox"/>	Joint pain
<input type="checkbox"/>	Loss of libido	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mood swings
<input type="checkbox"/>	Night sweats	<input type="checkbox"/>	Osteoporosis
<input type="checkbox"/>	Stress incontinence	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tingling extremities
	Vaginal dryness	<input type="checkbox"/>	Weight gain

What is menopause?

Menopause occurs naturally when a person stops producing the hormones oestrogen and progesterone.

This can lead to symptoms affecting different areas of the body. It may also lead to changes that impact a person's long-term health and wellbeing.

What is menopause caused by cancer?

- Menopause may result as a side effect of your cancer treatment or because you have been asked to stop your hormone replacement therapy due to your cancer diagnosis.
- Menopausal symptoms caused by cancer and its treatment can sometimes be more severe and sudden than natural menopause.
- As menopausal symptoms overlap with other common symptoms such as fatigue, sexual dysfunction, insomnia and mood issues, this may delay healthcare professionals recognising or managing these symptoms.
- Your periods may be affected by your cancer therapy. Your periods may stop as a result. This can be permanent or your periods may return after some time. If you have had surgery or radiation to specific areas, it may cause permanent loss of your periods and a reduction in fertility.
- As your menopausal status may be permanent or temporary, discussing this with your healthcare team can help improve your overall physical and mental wellbeing.



Improve your health

1. Getting active

Physical activity can help you manage and cope better with symptoms. Choose an activity you enjoy to get the most benefit from it.

- Improve your fitness, promote weight management and keep your heart healthy.
- Exercise can improve endorphins and serotonin which enhance your mood.

For free information, support and programmes to help you become more active and improve your health and wellbeing, go to:

- www.hse.ie/exercisevideos
- www.cancerrehabilitation.ie

2. Minding your sexual and pelvic health


Because you have less oestrogen you may develop thinning, drying or inflammation of the vagina. This can make sexual activity, penetration or a gynaecological examination uncomfortable.

Your pelvic floor muscles may change. This can impact you in a number of ways. This can make you more likely to lose bladder control (incontinence) or have problems with intercourse. You may also be prone to urine infections.

Other symptoms include vaginal discomfort, itching and loss of sensation during sexual activity.

There are creams and gels available to help with vaginal dryness, including vaginal moisturisers and water-based lubricants. In most cases vaginal oestrogen may be suitable. Ask your healthcare team for more information.

You can also ask your GP about a referral to a woman's health physiotherapist.



Improve your health

3. Minding your mental health

There are strategies to help you manage emotional changes, sleep disturbance and symptoms like night sweats or hot flushes. They may also help cognitive issues such as brain fog, concentration problems, word finding, memory and other issues.

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) and counselling can be helpful for managing some of these symptoms and can improve your quality of life.

Physical activity can be helpful for managing symptoms such as anxiety or depression.

Benefits can be seen from complementary therapies such as yoga and acupuncture.

Contact your GP or primary care or your community cancer support centre for information and advice; hse.ie/thealliance

4. Eating well and lifestyle

Eat a balanced diet to maintain a healthy weight, strong bones, and a healthy heart.

Limit foods and drinks that may increase hot flushes and disturb your sleep, such as coffee and spicy foods.

Limit alcohol and quit smoking. Check out askaboutalcohol.ie and www.quit.ie for more information.

There is no scientific evidence to support herbal and health food supplements.

5. Medicines

Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) can be a treatment option for menopausal symptoms. However you should discuss this with your healthcare team.

There are non-HRT drug therapies that can be discussed with your healthcare team. Examples of these drugs are low-dose anti-depressants and medications for an over-active bladder that can help with menopausal symptoms.

Other useful websites

“Let’s talk about menopause and cancer”

booklet provides resources, information and support.

Empower – is a menopause and cancer survivorship programme for women impacted by menopause following cancer treatment such as surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

More information, including this leaflet, is available at:

www.hse.ie/menopauseandcancer



An **online personalised platform** for those impacted by gynaecological cancer:

www.thisisGO.ie



Irish Cancer Society:

<https://www.cancer.ie>



**Your GP, pharmacist and
healthcare team can help you
if you have any questions**

info@cancercontrol.ie

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