



Ireland South Women & Infants Directorate

Stiúrthóireacht Ban agus Naíonán Dheisceart Éireann

Together with women, babies and families,
our academic healthcare network strives
for clinical excellence and innovation.

Prescribable Alternatives to Hormone Replacement Therapy

Complex Menopause Clinic

Cork University Maternity Hospital

Booklet created by Dr. Brenda Moran, Dr. Karen Soffe, and CNM2 Rachel Guerin. With thanks to the Complex Menopause Service in the National Maternity Hospital, Dublin.

Non-hormonal prescribed medications can still be an effective way to treat common menopausal symptoms such as vasomotor symptoms (hot flushes and night sweats), mood symptoms such as anxiety and low mood, and poor sleep. These are conventional medications which are licenced for other conditions but have been observed to help menopausal symptoms in some women.

Fluctuating and declining ovarian hormone levels during perimenopause, along with loss of estrogen after menopause, can affect the area of the brain (known as the thermoregulatory centre) which controls how we regulate body temperature - and this can result in hot flushes and night sweats in some women. Some of the prescribable alternatives to HRT can also work in this area of the brain, usually via small chemicals called neurotransmitters, thereby improving vasomotor symptoms. They can also work in other areas of the brain thereby improving mood symptoms and sleep.

People respond differently to these medications, and like all medications they can have side-effects which can sometimes limit their use. It is not uncommon to have to try a few different types to see what suits best.

Medication	Benefits	Common side-effects
Gabapentin	May help hot flushes, night sweats, mood symptoms such as anxiety, migraines, sleep, and neuropathic pain	Dry mouth, dizziness, drowsiness, weight gain
Pregabalin	May help hot flushes, night sweats, mood symptoms, migraines, neuropathic pain	Dry mouth, dizziness, drowsiness, weight gain
Clonidine	May help hot flushes, night sweats and migraines. Licenced medication for menopausal hot flushes	Dry mouth, dizziness, headaches, drowsiness, constipation, low blood pressure
Oxybutynin	May help hot flushes, night sweats, overactive bladder	Dry eyes, dry mouth, constipation, urinary retention or difficulty passing urine, headaches
SNRIs such as Venlafaxine	May help hot flushes, night sweats, mood symptoms	Vivid dreams, poor sleep, stomach issues, insomnia, loss of libido, dizziness, withdrawal effect
SSRIs such as Sertraline & Escitalopram	May help hot flushes, night sweats, mood symptoms	Stomach issues, poor sleep, loss of libido
Amitriptyline	May help sleep, migraines, neuropathic pain	Dry mouth, constipation, drowsiness, dangerous in overdose
Melatonin	May help with sleep	Daytime sleepiness, headaches, dizziness
Mirtazepine	May help mood symptoms, sleep, hot flushes and night sweats	Daytime sleepiness, dizziness, stomach issues, weight gain, withdrawal effect
Beta Blockers such as propranolol	May help with anxiety, migraines, palpitations	Low blood pressure, cold hands and feet, fatigue, dizziness, worsening of asthma

Menopause symptom checker

Please use this symptom checker prior to treatment and during treatment so we can evaluate your response.

Cycle changes	Yes	No		Vasomotor	Yes	No
Shorter period cycles				Hot flushes		
Lighter period cycles				Night sweats		
Heavier period cycles						
Bleeding in between periods				Mood/Memory		
Longer period cycle or skipped periods				Anxiety		
				Feeling low		
Physical				Tearfulness		
Headache				Irritability		
Palpitations				Mood swings		
Joint pains				Bursts of anger		
Aches and pains				Worsening PMS		
Burning mouth/tongue				Poor memory of 'Brain Fog'		
Dry skins/nails/eyes/hair				Poor Focus and concentration		
Itchy or crawling skin				Loss of interest in most things		
Hair loss				Feeling excitable		
Acne						
Numbness in parts of body				Bladder/Vaginal/GSM		
Breathing difficulties				Painful sex		
				Dry or itchy vagina		
Miscellaneous				Vaginal discharge		
Loss of libido				Overactive bladder		
Low energy				Recurrent UTIs		
Dizziness						
Tinnitus						
Poor sleep						

For further information and resources:

Menopause, HRT and POI:

Women's Health Concern: www.womens-health-concern.org

Menopause Matters: www.menopausematters.co.uk

Daisy Network: www.daisynetwork.org

Ireland's Menopause Campaign: www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/menopause/

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) "NICE Guideline (NG23) Menopause Diagnosis and Management" www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23

International Menopause Society: www.imsociety.org/

Diet and lifestyle:

Irish Heart Foundation: www.irishheart.ie

Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute : www.indi.ie

National Quit Smoking support: www.quit.ie

Alcohol information and support: www.askaboutalcohol.ie

Psychological wellbeing:

Apps to download for mindfulness, meditation, relaxation, sleep:

Headspace  Calm  Sleepio 

HSE Minding Your Wellbeing programme: www2.hse.ie/healthy-you/minding-yourwellbeing-programme.html

Sexual Health and Wellbeing

HSE sexual health and wellbeing resource: www.sexualwellbeing.ie

Pelvic Floor and Bladder:

International Urogynaecological Association: www.yourpelvicfloor.org

St Michaels Hospital, Pelvic Floor Centre: <https://stmichaels.ie/videos/>

<https://www.bladdermatters.co.uk/>

Bone Health and Osteoporosis

International Osteoporosis Foundation www.osteoporosis.foundation

Irish Osteoporosis Society: <https://www.irishosteoporosis.ie/>

Cancer services:

ARC Cancer Support Centres: www.arccancersupport.ie

Irish Cancer Society: www.cancer.ie

Marie Keating Foundation: www.mariekeating.ie

Podcasts and webinars

IANO (Irish Association for Nurses in Oncology): Menopause after Cancer Part 1 and 2

The menopause –everything you need to know with Dr Deirdre Lundy (Real Health podcast with Karl Henry)

Cork Arc Cancer Support webinar on managing hormonal therapies after a breast cancer diagnosis:
<https://corkcancersupport.ie/managing-hormonal-therapies-after-a-breast-cancer-diagnosis-webinar/>

Cork Arc Cancer Support webinar on exploring female sexuality and intimacy after a cancer diagnosis:
<https://corkcancersupport.ie/exploring-female-sexuality-and-intimacy-after-a-cancer-diagnosis/>

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