

Information resource for treatment induced or naturally occurring Menopause

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Introduction

- Managing menopausal symptoms can be difficult at the best of times.
- When these symptoms are as a result of breast cancer treatment or occur after breast cancer this is especially so.

The Breast Care Specialist Nurses at the Royal Surrey Breast Unit have developed a significant amount of experience and expertise helping our patients manage these symptoms.

- **You are not alone!**
- These symptoms affect a significant proportion of our patients and we are really keen to help.



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General Menopause Symptoms

- For General Menopause symptoms:
 - Click on the following link to bring up the booklet [‘Menopausal Symptoms and Breast Cancer’](#) from Breast Cancer Now.
 - This will give you information on general menopause symptoms and how to manage them and can be used in conjunction with this resource information leaflet:

Top Tip:

If you maintain a diary of how your symptoms are initially and what you were doing that day/week, you could then try a few of the suggested strategies and compare to see if any of your symptoms have improved.

This will also allow you to see any triggers that maybe making them worse such as alcohol, sitting too long or hot weather.

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Hot Flashes

- There are several ways in which to manage and reduce hot flashes.
 - Lifestyle Adaptations and self-management strategies ([Link here to pgs. 10-15](#))
 - Complementary Therapies have been found to reduce stress and therefore reduce hot flashes. ([Resources](#))
 - Auricular 'Ear' Acupuncture has been reported to reduce hot flashes by 60%.
 - Cognitive Behavioural Therapy has been proven to help reduce hot flashes by using breathing techniques and being mindful. ([Resources](#))
- Herbal remedies are not recommended for managing menopausal symptom in ladies who have had Breast Cancer as they 'could' contain phytoestrogens or other natural ingredients that potentially convert to oestrogen interact with the anti-oestrogen medication.



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Hot Flushes - Resources

- Complimentary Therapies

- These are available at the Fountain Centre in the Royal Surrey and they will be able to give you advice on local independent Therapists.
<https://www.fountaincentre.org/>

- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

- A free online course can be found [here](#)
- The [Centre for Psychology Facebook Page](#) has lots of information
- [British Menopause Society Info](#)
- Go to Pg 31 of the '[Menopausal Symptoms and Breast Cancer](#)' booklet you will find the contact details of the British Complementary Medicine Association (BCMA) which will help you find reputable Therapists.

- Herbal Remedies

- Information about how they work and why they are not recommended for breast cancer patients can be found [here](#)

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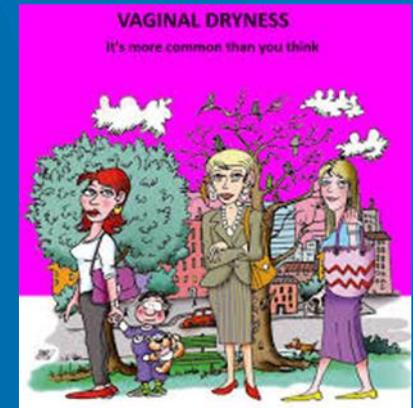


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Urogenital / Vaginal symptoms

- Vaginal atrophy (atrophic vaginitis)
 - thinning, drying and inflammation of the vaginal walls is common when oestrogen levels are lowered.
 - Vaginal dryness can have a substantial negative impact on sexual and overall quality of life.
 - Some women are reluctant to seek treatment and therefore the condition is often left undertreated. There are simple ways in which pain, itching and dryness can be eased.



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Urogenital/ Vaginal - Resources

- Please refer to [‘Your Body Sex and Intimacy’](#) (Page 22 onwards) and also the [‘Menopausal Symptoms and Breast Cancer’](#) booklet (page 18)
- The Breast Clinical Nurse Specialists
 - We have a supply of Vaginal Moisturisers and Lubricants which can be sent to you to try; they do not contain any hormones.
 - If they are effective in reducing your symptoms, then you can get them on a repeat prescription via your GP.
 - We would always recommend that you start with these products before progressing to vaginal oestrogens. It would depend on your symptoms as to whether a Vaginal Moisturiser is required or a Vaginal Lubricant as they both work differently so please contact us

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Intimacy

- Intimacy can also be an issue post Breast Cancer Treatment and whilst on Endocrine Treatment
- The ['Your Body Sex and Intimacy'](#) booklet gives extremely helpful advice on becoming more intimate again with a partner after Breast Cancer. It gives ways of how to break down invisible barriers that may have built up.



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Painful joints

- In menopause low oestrogen levels can lead to joint pain and are common side effects of systemic breast cancer therapies.
- Lifestyle measures and non-hormonal interventions should be first-line management for oestrogen deficiency symptoms.
- Weight loss, reducing alcohol intake and reducing stress are changes that can be made to reduce joint pain.



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Painful Joints

- Increasing activity can improve not only joint pain but makes you feel better emotionally.
- Some exercise routines can involve relaxation at the end which will help you manage stress levels.
 - Yoga, Nordic Walking or Pilates are gentle exercises that can improve joint pain associated with Endocrine Treatments.
 - You Tube have many varied exercise/activity/stretching routines to suit all levels of fitness, please be careful when increasing your activity and only do what feels comfortable.
 - [Click here](#) and Type in your activity and level of choice e.g. 'Stretches for over 50's beginners'.
 - 'Breast Cancer Haven' have online exercise resources please [click here](#)

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Painful joints

- Acupuncture can also relieve joint pain in some people. Please contact the [Fountain Centre](#) who have information on accessing Acupuncture Specialists
- Reflexology or Aromatherapy massage can also help alleviate joint pain.
 - Depending on where you are along your treatment pathway this may be available via The [Fountain Centre](#)
 - Breast Care Now have contact details of reputable Therapists who you can contact independently: Please [click here](#) :
- Pain killers such as Paracetamol will help alleviate pain and you can also take Ibuprofen providing you have no underlying condition that prevents you from taking them.

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Feeling depressed, low in mood, or anxious

- Some women who have had a diagnosis of breast cancer find themselves feeling anxious a lot of the time.
- Sometimes anxiety can become so overwhelming it leads to panic attacks, causing further fear and worry. It is important to speak to a Healthcare Professional who can guide you to resources that may help you feel better.



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Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

- CBT is recommended to alleviate depressed mood, anxiety and sleep deprivation for women during the menopause, post menopause and those that are on Endocrine Therapy.
- The associated drop in oestrogen levels can affect self-esteem and lead to low mood due to hot flushes affecting sleep, and psychosocial stresses which often accumulate during mid-life or during/post breast cancer treatment.
- More information about CBT can be found in this leaflet from the British Menopause Society. [Click Here](#)
- A free online Cognitive Behavioural Therapy course can be accessed online via the Centre for Psychology. [Click Here](#).
- There is also a [Facebook page](#) with lots of information from the Centre for Psychology which you may wish to look at.

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Dealing with low mood and stress

- The NHS website has many resources on improving mood and dealing with Stress. Please follow the link below.
- [‘5 steps to mental wellbeing’](#)
- They also have information and links to Mental Health Apps that are reviewed and recommended: such as ‘Headspace, Beat Panic, and Big White Wall’ all available on NHS Mental Health Apps
- The Fountain Centre can also help you as they have trained Counsellors and Coaches who can offer psychological and emotional support. Please ring them to book an appointment on: 01483 406618 or follow the [link](#).

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Lack of Sleep

- Sometimes changes to routines can interrupt sleep pattern as well as stress and uncertainty.
- If you are having issues sleeping please look at the [NHS website](#) which gives practical advice on getting a restful night's sleep.
- Please use these resources and let the Breast Clinical Nurse Specialists know if you need any further support.



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...and finally!

- We hope you find this information resource helpful.
- Please do not suffer in silence ring the Breast Clinical Nurse Specialists if you need any support to manage your symptoms.
- Please do not stop taking your medication 'Talk to us first'

- Best Wishes
- Olga, Gill, Christine, Sian and Theresa x
- Telephone 01483 406624

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