
TRANSITIONS & TRIUMPHS: COPING WITH MENOPAUSE AND BEYOND

NAVIGATING EMOTIONAL WELLNESS THROUGH PERIMENOPAUSE AND MENOPAUSE

Menopause is a natural life transition, officially marked 12 months after a woman's last menstrual period, but the years leading up to it, called perimenopause, often bring the most noticeable emotional and physical changes. For many, it can bring emotional and physical changes that feel anything but "natural.". Menopause comes with shifts in hormones that can impact energy, sleep, and emotional symptoms like mood swings, anxiety, and difficulty concentrating. Approximately 75-80% of women experience some symptoms, and up to 40% report significant mood or sleep changes during this time. Recognizing that these hormonally driven changes are common and that effective treatments exist that can help women approach this transition with understanding and confidence.

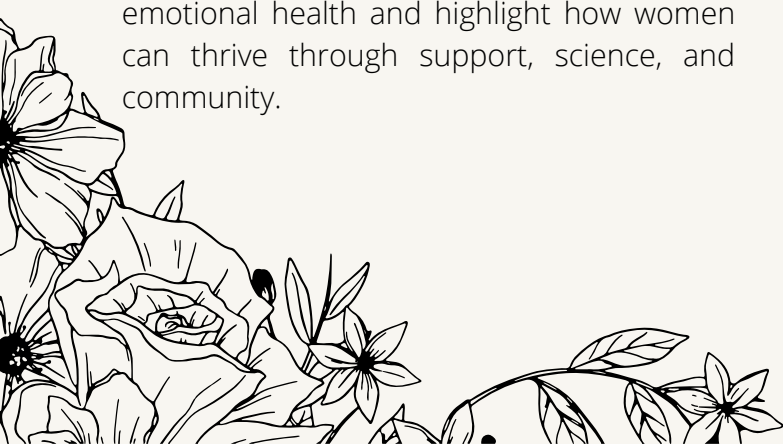
This October, during the month of World Menopause Day, we will focus on the intersection of hormonal change and emotional health and highlight how women can thrive through support, science, and community.

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EMOTIONAL HEALTH DURING MENOPAUSE

The transition that occurs with menopause is not just a biological milestone, but also a time of emotional adjustment. Many women experience mood swings, increased anxiety, or sleep disturbances as hormone levels fluctuate. Changes in estrogen and progesterone can have direct and indirect effects on the brain, influencing how we handle stress, regulate mood, and rest at night.

It's important to know that while these changes are common, they don't have to define this chapter of life. With the right support and care, emotional well-being can actually improve during and after the transition.

EVIDENCE-BASED NON-PHARMACOLOGIC STRATEGIES FOR COPING AND GROWTH

1. COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (CBT)

CBT is one of the most effective psychological treatments for managing anxiety, irritability, and sleep changes that can come with menopause. Working with a trained therapist, women can learn tools to identify negative thinking patterns, regulate emotions, and respond to stress more effectively. Many women find that CBT not only improves mood but also helps manage hot flashes and sleep issues.

2. MINDFULNESS AND RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

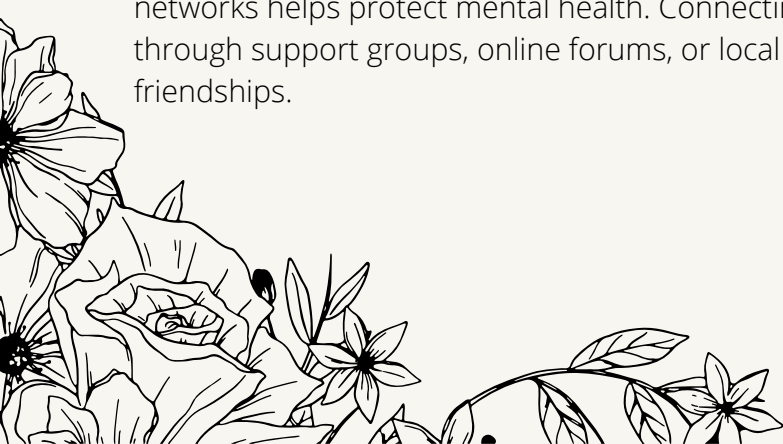
Mindfulness and relaxation practices, such as yoga and breathing exercises, can help regulate the body's stress response and support better emotional balance. Even short daily practices, like a five-minute breathing break or body scan, can improve calmness and focus.

3. NUTRITION AND MOVEMENT

Eating patterns that emphasize whole foods, lean proteins, and omega-3s can boost mood and stabilize energy. Regular movement, whether walking, yoga, or strength training, helps regulate hormones and reduce stress. These healthy routines also support heart and bone health during midlife and beyond.

4. SOCIAL CONNECTION AND PEER SUPPORT

Isolation can make emotional symptoms feel more intense. Building and maintaining strong social networks helps protect mental health. Connecting with others going through similar changes, through support groups, online forums, or local meetups, can offer validation, laughter, and new friendships.



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EVIDENCE-BASED PHARMACOLOGIC STRATEGIES FOR EMOTIONAL HEALTH

For some women, non-pharmacologic approaches alone aren't enough to manage mood or sleep changes during menopause. Medications can be an important part of comprehensive care.

- **Menopausal Hormone Therapy (MHT):** Estrogen therapy, with or without progesterone depending on uterine status, can help stabilize mood, improve sleep, and ease hot flashes. It may be particularly helpful when mood symptoms coincide with physical symptoms of menopause.
- **Antidepressants:** Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) and serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs) are effective for treating depression and anxiety that arise or worsen during the menopause transition. Some antidepressants also reduce vasomotor symptoms.
- **Other Options:** For those who are not good candidates for hormone therapy, newer non-hormonal medications, such as fezolinetant, can effectively reduce hot flashes and improve sleep and quality of life. In some cases, short-term use of sleep aids or other symptom-targeted medications may also be appropriate, ideally combined with behavioral strategies for sleep and stress management.

Medication decisions should always be personalized, weighing benefits, risks, and individual preferences in collaboration with a clinician familiar with menopause care.

SUPPORTING IDENTITY AND RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH MIDLIFE

Menopause often invites reflection on identity, purpose, and connection. Many women notice shifts in how they see themselves as partners, parents, professionals, and caregivers—often balancing changing family dynamics, including caring for aging parents or launching children into adulthood. Open conversations with loved ones about these evolving roles and identities can foster understanding and strengthen relationships.

At the same time, this life stage can spark renewal—a chance to rediscover passions, pursue long-held goals, and align daily life with what matters most. When viewed as a transition of growth and possibility, menopause can become a time of empowerment, self-awareness, and renewed purpose.



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WORLD MENOPAUSE DAY – OCTOBER 18

World Menopause Day is recognized annually to raise awareness about the physical, emotional, and social aspects of menopause. It's a reminder that this transition affects every woman differently and that support, understanding, and accurate information can make all the difference.

This year's theme is "Lifestyle Medicine" centering on raising awareness and sharing knowledge. Take this opportunity to talk openly about menopause with friends, family, and healthcare providers, and to explore local or virtual events focused on women's midlife health.

COMMUNITY AND CLINICAL SUPPORT - LOCAL RESOURCES

Menopause affects the **body, mind, and relationships**, and addressing all three areas is key to long-lasting wellness. Collaborative care that includes gynecologists, primary care providers, behavioral health clinicians, nutritionists, and support groups helps ensure that women receive **comprehensive, compassionate care** tailored to their needs.

Women's Behavioral Health & Wellness (WBHW) at CU Medicine

- **Colorado Women's Behavioral Health and Wellness** offers specialized care for mood and emotional changes related to reproductive transitions, including menopause. Our interdisciplinary team provides both therapy and medication management, tailoring treatment to each individual's needs and goals.
- **Menopause Education Series:** A 4-week virtual group focused on coping strategies, sleep, and identity in [midlife. Register [here today!](#)
- **Individual Therapy and Behavioral Health Services:** Evidence-based CBT, mindfulness, and interpersonal therapy approaches. [CU Anschutz WBHW Clinic Website](#)
- **Medication Management:** Expert psychiatric evaluation and treatment for mood, anxiety, and sleep symptoms related to menopause and other reproductive life stages.

UCHealth Women's Care at Anschutz

Provides integrated gynecologic and hormonal health support, including menopause hormone therapy [h1] consultations and referrals to behavioral clinicians. <https://www.uchealth.org/diseases-conditions/menopause-and-perimenopause/>

Colorado Medicine Ob/Gyn

Educational resources on menopause symptoms and treatment options:
<https://obgyn.coloradowomenshealth.com>



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NATIONAL RESOURCES AND SUPPORT GROUPS

- **The Menopause Society (formerly NAMS):** Offers evidence-based information and provider directory. www.menopause.org
- **International Menopause Society (IMS):** Organizer of World Menopause Day; offers global educational materials and webinars. www.imsociety.org
- **Red Hot Mamas®:** National menopause education and peer support organization www.redhotmamas.org
- **Psychology Today:** Lists therapists specializing in “Women’s Issues / Reproductive Transitions” by location. www.psychologytoday.com
- **Menopause Mastered (Denver Meetup):** Local peer-led support group promoting connection and shared coping strategies. <https://www.meetup.com/menopause-mastered-denver/>

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Menopause is a time of change, but also of growth and renewal. With knowledge, evidence-based care, and community, women can navigate this transition with strength and confidence



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