# **Mental Health & Mood Changes** in Menopause

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Menopause and perimenopause are times of significant hormonal fluctuation that can affect the brain as well as the body. Mood changes, anxiety, depression, and cognitive symptoms are common and often under-recognised.

Many women experience mental health changes for the first time during this stage of life.

## WHY MOOD CHANGES HAPPEN

Hormonal shifts - particularly changes in estrogen and progesterone - can affect brain chemistry and emotional regulation.

During perimenopause, hormone levels may fluctuate unpredictably, which can make symptoms more noticeable and harder to anticipate.

## COMMON MENTAL HEALTH SYMPTOMS

Women may experience:

- Low mood or sadness
- Anxiety or increased worry
- Irritability or anger
- Mood swings
- Loss of motivation or enjoyment
- Feeling overwhelmed or emotionally sensitive
- Brain fog or difficulty concentrating
- Sleep disruption affecting mood

These symptoms can come and go or vary in intensity.



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## EMOTIONAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL CHANGES

Mood symptoms in menopause are often not just “chemical”; they are influenced by multiple overlapping factors, including:

- Hormonal fluctuations
- Sleep disruption (hot flushes, night waking)
- Life stressors (caring responsibilities, work pressures, relationship changes)
- Previous mental health history
- Physical symptoms such as pain or fatigue

## DEPRESSION & ANXIETY RISK

Research shows an increased risk of developing or worsening:

- Depression
- Anxiety disorders

This risk can be higher in women with a previous history of mood disorders, but it can also occur for the first time during perimenopause or menopause.

## COGNITIVE SYMPTOMS (“BRAIN FOG”)

Many women also report changes in thinking and memory, including:

- Difficulty concentrating
- Forgetfulness
- Slower word recall
- Mental fatigue
- Reduced mental clarity

These changes are usually temporary and related to hormonal and sleep changes rather than dementia.

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## CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Mood symptoms are often influenced by more than hormones alone:

- Chronic stress or burnout
- Poor sleep quality
- Relationship or family pressures
- Workload and life transitions
- Physical health conditions or chronic pain
- Alcohol or substance use
- Reduced exercise or self-care time

## WHEN TO SEEK HELP

It's important to speak with a healthcare provider if:

- Symptoms last more than 2 weeks
- Mood changes interfere with daily life
- Anxiety or depression is worsening
- You have persistent sleep disturbance
- You experience loss of interest or enjoyment
- You have thoughts of self-harm

## TREATMENT & SUPPORT OPTIONS

Effective, individualised treatment may include:

### Lifestyle support

- Regular exercise (especially resistance training and walking)
- Sleep support strategies
- Stress reduction (mindfulness, relaxation techniques)
- Nutrition and alcohol reduction

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### Psychological support

- Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)
- Counselling or psychotherapy
- Stress and coping strategies

### Medical treatments

- Menopausal hormone therapy (MHT) in appropriate cases
- Antidepressants (for moderate–severe symptoms)
- Treatment of sleep or hot flushes if contributing

Mental health changes during menopause are common, real, and treatable. They are not a sign of weakness or “just stress”, they are often linked to hormonal shifts combined with life stage factors. With the right support, most women see significant improvement in mood, clarity, and overall wellbeing.



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## GET EXPERT ADVICE

**If you are putting up with dreadful symptoms because you think MHT is unsafe, get evidence-based advice from a doctor who is knowledgeable about menopause treatments.**

- **WellFemme:**
  - Mental Health Issues Around Menopause webinar, Our range of Mental Health Blogs, Guides & Factsheets, Beyond Blue, Lifeline Australia, Australasian Menopause Society, Menopausal Health Assessment, Telehealth Menopause Consultations
- **Australian Government:** Information resources

**For more information about how menopause and perimenopause will impact on your health, take WellFemme's free online Menopausal Health Assessment.**

Scan this code to see our range of clinical services.




REFERENCES: As per https://wellfemme.com.au/useful-menopause-links/