

A GUIDE TO SELF-CARE:

5 Solutions for Better Sleep During Menopause

Menopause is such a dreaded word in a woman's world ! It brings along so many life-altering changes. While "hot flashes" are the most common symptoms associated with menopause, many women find that they often experience disturbed sleep as well.



Research shows that sleep disorders affect **39-47%** of perimenopausal women, between the ages of **40-50**, and **35-60%** of post-menopausal women, **above 50**.

If you have begun your journey with menopause you may experience **insomnia**, that is you may take **30 minutes or longer** to fall asleep, get **fewer than 6 hours** of sleep, 3 or more nights in the week or wake up too early.

Effects of Poor Sleep

Tired and lethargic during the day
Irritability
Anxiety
Stress
Memory loss
Difficulty in concentrating
Headaches
Acidity
Increased blood pressure
Risk of heart disease



Why does menopause affect your sleep?

▶ Menopause causes a surge of **adrenaline hormone**

This is the hormone responsible for the body's reaction to stress, leading to your "**fight or flight**" responses.

It makes your skin red and flushed, increases your heart rate and causes you to sweat.

Hot flashes can occur at any time of the day, but when it happens during the night, it tends to wake you up and makes it hard for you to fall asleep again, due to the sudden surge in energy

▶ **Mood swings**, depression and anxiety go hand in hand with menopause, due to the fluctuating levels of **oestrogen and progesterone hormones**.

▶ A common sleep disorder, **obstructive sleep apnea** affects **20% of women** experiencing menopause. You may have difficulty breathing when you sleep.

The lack of air and feeling of suffocation may wake you up, leading to **disturbed sleeping patterns**

A GUIDE TO SELF-CARE: Tips for Better Sleep

01



GET THE HEART PUMPING ... AT THE RIGHT TIME

Just 30 minutes of exercise, especially aerobic activities like walking, cycling or running, are effective. Studies have shown that exercise increases the slow-wave deep sleep, which gives the brain and the body a chance to recoup and recover.

If you finish exercising at least 1-2 hours before sleeping, your endorphins have a chance to settle down and give your brain a chance to wind down. In addition to muscle fatigue, exercise also helps to keep anxious or negative thoughts at bay, which in turn gives you good quality, peaceful sleep.

SET A SLEEPING SCHEDULE ... AND STICK TO IT!

An effective sleeping schedule also involves setting regular eating times, avoiding heavy and spicy meals in the latter half of the day, to keep physical symptoms like acidity at bay. Keeping the bedroom light, airy and breezy makes it a comfortable environment to fall asleep in. Light, breathable fabrics like cotton and linen, when used for bedding and pyjamas, also keeps body temperatures low, and helps to avoid triggering hot flashes



02

03

CUT DOWN THE CAFFEINE!



Avoiding caffeine in tea, coffee or energy drinks especially in the late afternoons or evenings, will help to gradually decrease energy levels, making it easier to fall asleep. Studies conducted by the Women's Health Clinic at the Mayo Clinic Minnesota, have revealed that "limiting caffeine intake may be useful for those postmenopausal women who have bothersome hot flashes and night sweats."

STAY AWAY FROM SCREENS

The blue light emitted from the screens of smart devices like phones, tablets or computers have been known to decrease melatonin hormone levels in the body, which in turn disturbs our circadian rhythm or the natural sleep and wake cycle. Cutting back on screen time, 2-3 hours before going to bed, allows us to fall asleep faster.

04



05

TREAT THE ROOT CAUSE

There are several foods that help to naturally increase female hormones in the body, known as **phytoestrogens** or dietary oestrogens, like soya bean, flax seeds, dried fruits and sesame seeds.

The most common medications given for menopause are **oestrogen and progesterone** hormone replacement therapies, along with low dose antidepressants, in order to relieve symptoms like hot flashes, anxiety and mood swings. **Melatonin** is also given to encourage adequate sleep.

SAY FAREWELL TO POOR SLEEP!

The after-effects of a restless night with a lack of good sleep is never fun.

Small changes in lifestyle, diet and schedules, along with appropriate medication, may help to provide some relief from insomnia.

After all, as the old proverb says, "A good laugh and a long sleep are the best cures in the doctor's book."

REFERENCES

- <https://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/sleep-blue-light>
- https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/foods-with-estrogen#TOC_TITLE_HDR_14
- <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/how-does-menopause-affect-my-sleep>
- <https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/829114>
- <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/exercising-for-better-sleep>
- <http://www.menopause.org/for-women/sexual-health-menopause-online/causes-of-sexual-problems/depression-mood-swings-anxiety>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5323064/>
- <https://www.healthline.com/health/menopause/menopause-and-insomnia#connection>
- <https://www.healthline.com/health/adrenaline-rush>
- <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/women-sleep/menopause-and-sleep#:~:text=Menopausal%20symptoms%20can%20vary%20from,60%20percent%20of%20postmenopausal%20women.>
- <https://www.healthline.com/health/menopause/menopause-and-insomnia#connection>