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Menopause - Why do my joints and muscles ache?



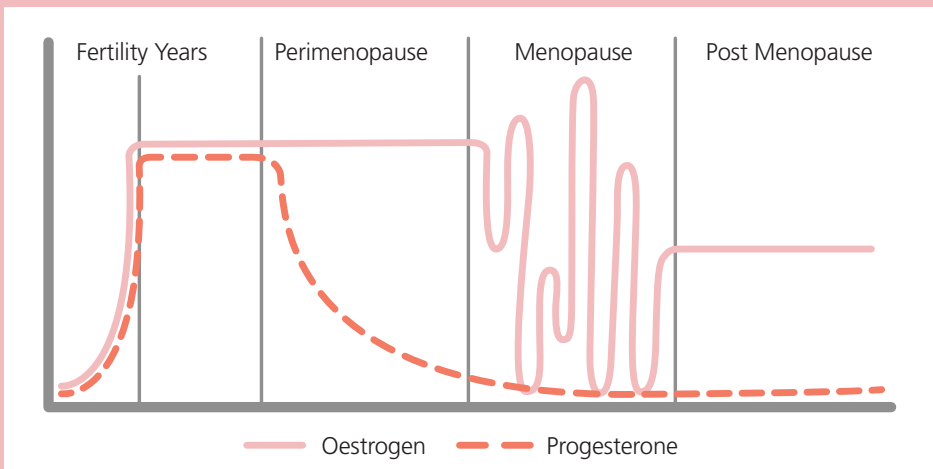
Why do my joints and muscles ache?

During the perimenopause and menopause there are significant fluctuations in women's hormone levels. Oestrogen levels fluctuate and fall significantly and both progesterone and testosterone levels reduce. A reduction in these hormones can have a significant impact on the bones, muscles and soft tissues of the body. Some of the important roles in the skeletal system that these hormones regulate are listed below.

Oestrogen: Helps to nourishes the tissues of the body and keep them youthful and elastic. Reduces the bodies inflammation levels and regulates new bone growth. Helps to regulate the bodies fluid levels so cells remain hydrated.

Progesterone: Boosts feelings of natural calmness, improves mood and increases pain threshold levels.

Testosterone: Supports and increases bone density and helps to turn fat into muscle.



What can I do to manage my symptoms?

Exercise- This can protect and strengthen the heart, bones and muscles. It will help to maintain and improve balance, body weight and mood improving general wellbeing.

Vary exercise to include cardiovascular, strength training and stretching. Exercises such as walking, yoga, swimming and gentle Pilates have been found to be of benefit. Avoid high impact exercises like running and jumping as this puts excessive stress through joints.

Hydrate- The body is less able to hold onto fluid due to reduced oestrogen levels, joints can become dehydrated and stiff. Drink plenty of fluids throughout the day to counteract this.

Lose weight if BMI high- Reduced testosterone level impact on the bodies ability to turn fat into muscle and decreased oestrogen levels increase the amount of fat distributed around your tummy. A normal BMI range is 18.5 - 24.9. Higher BMI levels can increase the amount of stress on joints.

Relaxation- Reduced progesterone can lead to reduced pain threshold levels and reduced levels of mood and calmness . It is important to make time in the day for relaxation. Each person is different so try a varied number of techniques to find one that suits you. Some good examples of relaxation are: CBT, Mindfulness, breathing exercises, visualisation exercises, reading or listening to calming music.

Medications- Record and then discuss your symptoms with your GP. They can advise what treatments are available and what might be right for you.

Work place adjustments- Consider if your symptoms are affecting you at work or how your role may be contributing to your symptoms. For help and support read the Menopause at work guidance which can be found on the SFH staff intranet or discuss with your manager or occupational health.

Life Style Top Tips

Diet- Eating a varied healthy balanced diet will help to support your bones, joints and muscles and help to reduce excessive weight gain.

Prevent sedentary positions and repetitive tasks- Take regular rest breaks and alternate tasks.

Wear flat supportive shoes- Reducing the stress on your lower joints will make you more comfortable when standing or walking for long periods.

Exercise moderately for 150 minutes or vigorously for 75 minutes per week- Joint mobility, strength and flexibility will improve and weight gain will be reduced.

Stop smoking- Nicotine can increase pain sensitivity levels and lead to cartilage loss in joints.

Avoid alcohol- General dehydration can lead to increased joint pains and stiffness.

Who should I contact?

Your GP- Contact your GP surgery if you are struggling with menopausal symptoms or would like advice about medication treatment options.

Line manager- If you feel your menopause symptoms are affecting you at work or you would like to discuss any aspects of menopause at work please contact your line manager and have a look at the SFH menopause guidance document , which can be found on the staff intranet site.

Occupational health department- If you or your manager would like advice around possible work place adjustments that could help ask your manager to complete an Occupational health manager referral form so individual advice can be provided.

Where can I find more help?

Occupational health service

Extension: 3780/3781

Sfh-tr.occupational.health@nhs.net

[SFH E-learning: Menopause and joint pain/fatigue](#)

Menopause at work policy guidance document

<https://sfhnet.notts.nhs.uk/admin/webpages/default.aspx?ReclD=3203>

<http://sfhnet.notts.nhs.uk/content/showcase.aspx?contentid=54919>

Nice guidelines

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/ifp/chapter/menopause>

NHS Choices

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/free-fitness-ideas/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/livewell/menopause/pages/meopausehome.aspx>

External links

www.womens-health-concern.org

www.menopausematters.co.uk

www.managemymenopause.co.uk

www.rockmymenopause.com

www.rcog.org.uk

www.thebms.org.uk