



Make Sense Of Your
Menopause

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Changes To The Cycle

The Menopause is a natural phase of life that can span a number of years as the body adjusts to this change and is part of the normal ageing process. Whilst it's normal and natural, it can be daunting and unexpected with physical and emotional implications. There are many effects of the menopause and these vary from person to person. It's possible to go through the menopause without any symptoms although approximately 80% of women do experience some at varying degrees.

The average age in the UK for menopause is 51, with the majority of people likely to experience the menopause between the ages of 45 and 55. The menopause is defined as a time in life when menstrual cycles stop. It happens because oestrogen and progesterone naturally reduce, meaning ovaries eventually stop releasing eggs, periods cease and pregnancy is no longer possible.

For many, it's a signal of freedom and a positive change, but some people are heavily impacted by the hormonal change. It's important to get advice where needed and find support. You may have questions around treatments and alternatives to HRT and it can be beneficial to talk with others who are also going through the menopause. This booklet will guide you on what happens to the body during the menopause, the different stages and potential symptoms, as well as some simple steps and advice on diet and lifestyle to support you through the menopause and beyond. For more information, head to your local independent health store.

Aimee Benbow

BSc (Hons) MSc ANutr

Stages of the Menopause

The menopause is something all women go through and it is defined as the point in time 12 months after your last menstrual cycle. You may experience irregular cycles and other effects before this which is known as the 'perimenopause' phase. It is during this transition that hormone levels decline, specifically the production of oestrogen and progesterone, which causes irregular cycles.

Contrary to belief, it is often the 'perimenopause' phase that causes many of the

well-known symptoms rather than the 'menopause' itself. This stage can start up to 10 years before the menopause is established but is different for everyone.

Once the menopause phase has been confirmed and no cycles have occurred in over 12 months, this is then considered the 'postmenopause' stage. It is at this time that the severity of symptoms lessen and often stop, although some people still experience effects to an extent.

Perimenopause

Changes in
menstruation

Irregular
menstruation
+ other
symptoms

Your last
period

Postmenopause

Menopause
established

Symptoms
reduce

Signs of the Menopause

The impact of menopause can range from mild to significant, and can affect you in many ways. For some, the symptoms are more physical, and in others, psychological and cognitive effects are more of an issue. Initially, changes in menstruation occur, followed by other common symptoms which include:

Hot
flushes

Night
sweats

Headaches or
migraines

Brain
fog

Joint
pain

Bladder
weakness

Thinning
hair

Increased
anger

Changes
in mood

Urinary tract
infections

Low
libido

Weight
change

As well as these noticeable symptoms, the decline in hormones during the menopause can also impact other core areas of health including:

Bone Health – The reduced level of oestrogen is associated with reduced bone density and in turn significantly increases the risk of osteoporosis.

Cardiovascular Health – When oestrogen levels decline, the balance between LDL (bad cholesterol) and HDL (beneficial cholesterol) changes leading to increased levels of bad cholesterol. This higher level of LDL cholesterol gives rise to an increased risk of oxidised LDL cholesterol which is known to be detrimental to heart health through the increased risk of atherosclerosis.

Metabolic Syndrome – The risk and prevalence of metabolic syndrome increases during the menopause. Metabolic syndrome includes risk factors such as central obesity (fat around the internal organs), insulin resistance (pre-diabetes) and hypertension (high blood pressure). This is due to fat re-distribution as falling oestrogen levels lead to fat settling around the abdomen.

Menopause Support

Often prescribed by doctors to aid with the symptoms of the menopause, 'Hormone Replacement Therapy' or 'HRT', replaces the hormones which the body is no longer making to reduce the severity of the symptoms. However, there can be a number of reasons that people do not opt to take this medication (see below) and it is advisable that treatment options are discussed with your GP.

- 1 They may be medically advised not to
- 2 They may not tolerate taking hormones
- 3 They may wish to try a more natural approach

Some people suffer with various side effects from taking HRT including breast swelling or tenderness, nausea, cramps, digestive

discomfort or headaches.

The good news is there are a number of natural options available in the form of supplements from local independent health stores to help reduce some of the common menopausal symptoms.

Ashwagandha, an evergreen shrub featured in Ayurvedic traditions, may assist in alleviating some of the temperature dysregulating symptoms particularly during the perimenopause stage. A study on 100 women supplementing with 300mg ashwagandha daily found significant improvements in hot flushes as well as general quality of life scores during this time.

Maca is an adaptogenic plant which helps to increase the body's ability to deal with physical and mental stressors, including menopausal symptoms.



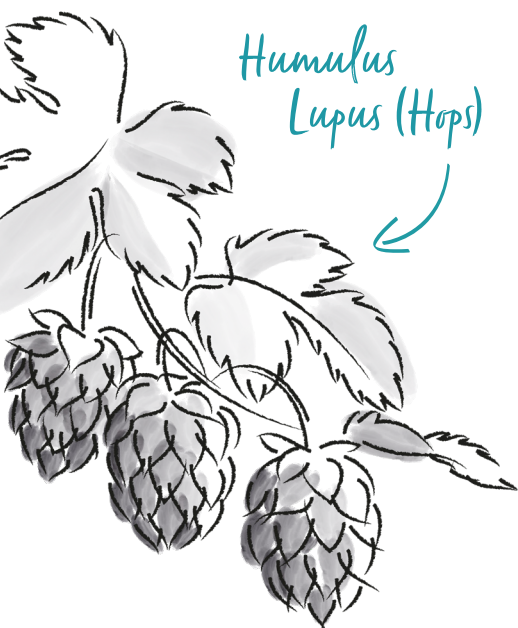
Maca has also been shown to act as a natural aphrodisiac and help improve energy levels and reduce the likelihood of fatigue.

Therefore, maca may also be of benefit for those who experience reduced libido during this transition.

Sage and Red Clover work as phytoestrogenic herbs, reducing symptoms such as hot flushes and sweating. Phytoestrogens are plant-derived compounds that mimic oestrogen by binding to oestrogen receptors in the body. This way they are able

to alleviate symptoms of the menopause by allowing the body to believe there is oestrogen present.

Hops Extract has been well studied for its benefits in relieving common menopause symptoms, when standardised to 8-prenylnaringenin (8-PN), another phytoestrogen. In one study lasting 12 weeks, supplementation with hops extract significantly reduced symptoms including hot flushes and night sweats.



Humulus
Lupulus (Hops)

Did You Know?

Currently **1 billion people** worldwide are transitioning through the menopause.

A survey by the British Menopause Society found that **1 in 2 women in Great Britain**, aged 45-65, go through menopause without consulting a medical professional.

(Ipsos MORI, 2016)

Lemon Balm leaf contains an active compound called 'rosmarinic acid' which has been shown in clinical trials to demonstrate clear benefits for memory and cognitive performance during the menopause. Lemon balm can also assist with sleep issues.

Borage and Evening Primrose oils, which are rich in gamma linolenic acid, an omega-6 fatty acid which helps to regulate hormone balance and can in turn lessen the severity of menopausal symptoms, in particular hot flushes and night sweats. Additionally, omega oils play an important role in skin health and can assist with skin and tissue structure as well as flexibility.

Saffron is a highly prized spice from the crocus flower that has a long history of being used to lift mood and improve wellbeing. Clinical studies have shown that taking 30mg of saffron extract daily can reduce the symptoms of low mood and depression during menopause.



Did You Know?

Humans are one of only a few mammals to experience a long life after the menopause. This evolutionary advantage allows for parents and grandparents to help offspring into adulthood and supports knowledge retention across generations.

Sleep

Sleep is vital to maintain health and wellbeing but can be severely impacted either due to the persistence of hot sweats or anxiety related issues.

On the next page are some simple tips to help you get more sleep.



Six Ways to Sleep Easy

1

Avoid bright screens for at least 1 hour before bedtime. The blue light emitted by phones, laptops, tablets and other devices can disrupt your sleep cycle.

2

Wear loose clothing to bed, particularly items made of natural fibers, such as cotton and linen to keep you cool.

3

Avoid caffeine, smoking and alcohol, throughout the day, as they can increase your body temperature, causing hot flushes and impacting sleep.

4

Keep the temperature of the bedroom relatively cool and well ventilated to reduce the likelihood of night sweats.

5

Avoid consuming spicy and hot food and drink before bed, as these can raise your body temperature.

6

Add magnesium to your night time routine, as it can reduce the effects of stress and help with uninterrupted sleep.

Menopause At A Glance

Symptoms	Cause
Brain fog (memory, concentration)	Falling levels of progesterone and oestrogen levels - hormones which both play a role in cognition by stimulating neuron communication and the growth of neural cells.
Hot flushes / Night sweats	Falling oestrogen levels confuse the hypothalamus, the part of the brain which is responsible for controlling hormone secretion and body temperature. The hypothalamus reads the body as 'too hot' and triggers a series of reactions - sweating, palpitations, blood rushing to the surface - to try and get rid of heat.
Anxiety / Low mood / Mood swings	As oestrogen declines, serotonin (the 'happy hormone') also decreases and the number of serotonin receptors in the brain declines. This in turn increases the risk of low mood and depression.
Heart palpitations	Lower levels of oestrogen can lead to an overstimulation of the heart, especially in reaction to a hot flush where the body is working to try and cool the body quickly.
Vaginal dryness / Painful intercourse	Changes in oestrogen production cause the vaginal walls to become thin and less flexible. This also means there are fewer cells producing moisture, leading to vaginal dryness.
Sleeplessness	Progesterone is a sleep inducing hormone, and declining levels can lead to difficulty dropping off. Furthermore, experiencing night sweats can cause a disruptive night and make it difficult to get back to sleep.
Low energy / Fatigue	The decline in oestrogen and progesterone can affect other hormones, such as adrenal and thyroid hormones which regulate cellular energy in the body. If they are imbalanced, this can lead to feelings of fatigue.
Stress	Reduced oestrogen and progesterone are unable to keep levels of the stress hormone cortisol under control and exposure to new stressors throughout the day - such as hot flushes and brain fog - keep levels high and the ability to cope with stress decreases.
Urinary tract infections	Decreasing levels of oestrogen can alter the microbiome in the vagina and the bladder, making UTIs more likely. Furthermore, decreased pelvic strength may result in the bladder not fully emptying when passing urine which also leads to an increased risk of infection.
Joint pain	This can be an indicator of reduced collagen and tissue production, therefore leading to lack of support to the joints through reduced levels of connective tissue and cartilage.



Key Supplements

Lifestyle Tips

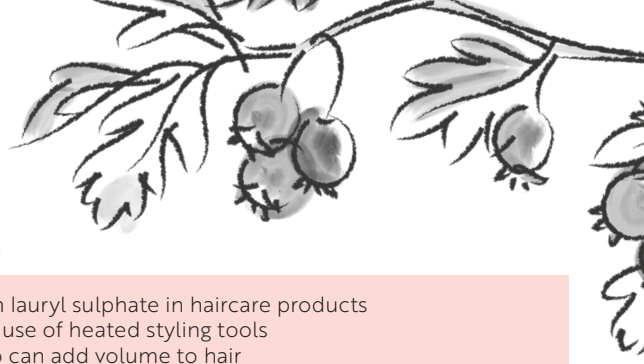
Maca, Lemon balm, Brahmi, Sage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do exercise that you enjoy• Improve your sleep habits• Take memory short-cuts - written notes and electronic reminders can be very helpful
Sage, Hops, Red clover, Fish oil, Flaxseed oil	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wear thin layers of clothing and choose cotton or linen nightwear• Carry a handheld fan in your bag• Avoid caffeine, alcohol and spicy foods• Keep your bedroom cool• Sip cold water
L-theanine, Lemon balm, Magnesium & B6, Saffron	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reach out to your support network or seek out new ones• Take up yoga, tai chi or meditation• Try Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
Magnesium taurate, Hawthorn, L-theanine	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Practice mindfulness techniques• Avoid caffeine, alcohol and spicy food• Discuss with your GP
Hyaluronic Acid, Vitamin C, Evening primrose oil	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider a water based, hyaluronic acid-rich lube• Avoid perfumed soap, bubble bath or personal care products
Cherries, Magnesium, L-theanine, Lemon balm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid screen time for at least 1 hour before bed• Use blackout curtains/blinds• Practice mindfulness techniques
Magnesium, CoQ10, Vitamin B5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exercise daily• Develop a good sleep routine• Go outside into natural light in the 30 minutes after rising
Rhodiola, Magnesium, Vitamin C, Ashwagandha	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask for help when you need it• Pursue activities you enjoy• Start practicing yoga
Cranberry, Mannose, Vitamin C, Probiotics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drink plenty of water• Avoid stimulants, caffeine and alcohol
Fish oil, Flaxseed oil, Curcumin, Boswellia, Ginger	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alternate heat and ice application to the affected area• Ask a physiotherapist for some gentle exercises

Menopause At A Glance

Symptoms	Cause
Thinning hair	Oestrogen and progesterone help hair grow and stay on the scalp for longer periods of time. When hormone levels drop, hair grows more slowly and becomes thinner.
Loss of libido	Testosterone is the main hormone for stimulating sexual desire and this declines dramatically as we age. Other physical effects from dropping oestrogen such as hot flushes, stress, and vaginal dryness can also have an adverse effect on your sex life, affecting both desire and response.
Weight Re-distribution	Falling oestrogen levels affect the way fat is stored. Instead of distributing evenly over the body, weight tends to settle around the abdomen area.
Bladder weakness	The sudden drop in oestrogen may cause pelvic muscles to weaken and loss of bladder control.
Headaches / Migraine	These can often be a result of sharp fluctuations in hormones. Even prior to menopause, you may notice a link between menstruation and headache or migraine occurrence, and this can be magnified during the menopause.
Aching muscles / Cramps	Reduced production of neurotransmitters such as serotonin and noradrenaline in menopause can lead to increased muscle pain as these both work to inhibit specific pain pathways.
Nausea	This may accompany hot flushes or headaches and can also be a side effect of hormone replacement therapy (HRT)

Other Changes To Consider:

Decline in bone density / Osteoporosis risk	Oestrogen helps to maintain bone density, meaning a drop in hormones can lead to significant bone loss and an increased risk of osteoporosis.
Cardiovascular health	Oestrogen helps to protect the lining of the artery walls and reduces the build-up of plaque. Less oestrogen increases the risk of plaque building up and coronary arteries becoming narrower. The body is put at further risk as levels of LDL (bad cholesterol) tend to increase whilst HDL (good cholesterol) levels decline.



Key Nutrients

Lifestyle Tips

Biotin, Iron, Zinc, Horsetail extract	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid sodium lauryl sulphate in haircare products• Minimise the use of heated styling tools• Dry shampoo can add volume to hair
Maca, Rhodiola	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider CBT to build confidence and counter body image• Change your sexual routine - try new toys, positions, or location
Saffron, Maca, Apple polyphenols	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Track your food intake• Avoid foods with added sugars and hydrogenated fats• Keep up the regular exercise
Icelandic angelica extract	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Practice your pelvic floor exercises• Limit caffeine and other foods and drinks that have a diuretic effect
Magnesium, Feverfew, Vitamin B2, CoQ10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stay hydrated• Apply a cool compress to the head or neck• Keep a food and drink diary to spot any patterns between intake and headaches
Magnesium, Electrolytes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Try ice and heat therapy on the area• Massage the affected area with arnica balm• Keep hydrated with water and electrolytes
Ginger	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get fresh air• Add ginger to meals or nibble pieces of unsweetened ginger
Calcium, Vitamin K2, Boron, Vitamin D3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commit to regular weight bearing exercise.• Stop smoking and reduce alcohol intake• Regularly eat fermented vegetables
Magnesium taurate, Vitamin B3, Fish oil, Potassium, Policosanol	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduce red meat consumption to no more than 3 times a week and alcohol intake to a max of 14 units a week• Aim to do at least 2 - 3 hours of exercise a week

Common Questions

How can I tell whether my symptoms are definitely the menopause?

It can be confusing, and some symptoms may be due to another condition. There are blood tests available online or via your GP which will confirm where you are on the menopause journey.

Can I take food supplements and HRT together?

Those prescribed HRT are advised to consider supplementing with vitamins B6, B12, folic acid and magnesium, as the absorption of these nutrients are impacted by this medication.

It is recommended that your experience with HRT is stable for 90 days before adding supplements to your protocol. There are no known contraindications between HRT and the vitamin, mineral and fatty acid supplements listed in this booklet, however, for herbal supplements such as sage, hops, red clover and shatavari, it is recommended to speak with your GP or pharmacist to check if you can take these alongside HRT because they have gentle phytoestrogenic properties.

Is it possible to stop taking HRT and switch to supplements and herbal remedies?

One-to-one advice from your prescribing GP or specialist is advisable when changing a medical protocol and supervision is recommended.

Where can I get advice on herbs and other supplements for the menopause?

Specialist independent health food stores have a wealth of experience and advice on all things natural. Health food stores are most-often owned, managed and staffed by women and they can be your support through the changes you are experiencing. Don't be shy, they've heard it all before and helped.



Lifestyle Advice

As well as considering supplements there are also a number of diet and lifestyle tips which can assist you through this transitional phase in your life.

A good, clean, balanced diet is especially important for those going through the menopause (and afterwards too). Avoiding heavily processed foods that are high in sugar, salt and additives is vital to reduce the risk of central obesity (fat around the middle), hypertension and diabetes.

Consuming foods rich in vitamins and minerals will ensure an abundance of vital nutrients are received by the body particularly to support bone and heart health. Increasing vitamin C intake with fresh fruit and vegetables will assist in skin and tissue health as vitamin C plays a key role in collagen production.

The body also needs a supply of essential fatty acids for natural lubrication, cardiovascular, skin and hair health. These essential omega oils can be found in nuts, seeds or oily fish, as well as specific fish and plant-based omega oils. Look for clean oils free from



heavy processing and contaminants. Organic certification will provide reassurance.

It is also important to maintain good gut health to ensure nutrients can be absorbed and utilised. Fermented foods are a source of friendly bacteria or supplemental probiotics are a targeted option to help support the digestive system.

It's important to be aware that there is an increased risk of osteoporosis post-menopause. Lifestyle and

dietary factors which increase the risk of developing this include smoking, being underweight, lack of exercise and deficiency in calcium and vitamin D in the diet. Therefore, ensure you get sufficient vitamin D by supplementing with a minimum of 400iu daily throughout the year (higher levels may be required short term if deficiency is determined). Calcium can be obtained in the diet through dairy products, and leafy green vegetables and fortified vegan options. Again, supplementation may need to be considered to achieve the required 700mg or more

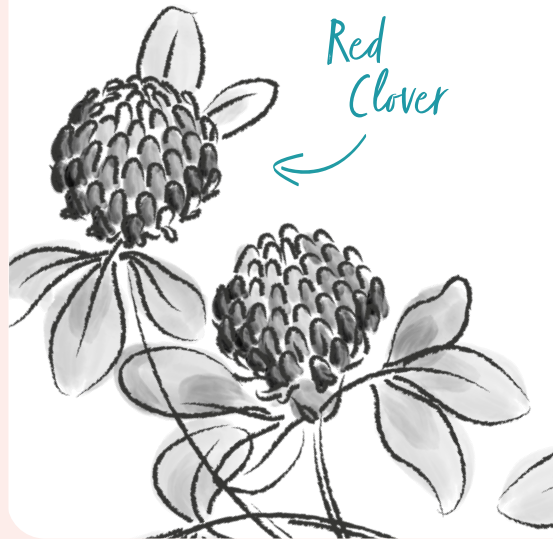
Did You Know?

Research on women in the US found that **73% of them** did not treat their symptoms.

(Bonafide, 2021)

Increased fruit and vegetable consumption **can significantly improve** common menopausal symptoms.

(Kroenke et al, 2012)



of calcium needed daily to support bone health.

Incorporate weight bearing exercise into your routine such as jogging or pilates, as this type of exercise can help slow down bone loss by bearing load on the bones themselves and assisting with reducing mineral loss from the bone matrix. Cardiovascular, muscle, cognitive and joint health can all also benefit from regular exercise.

Relaxation and 'You' time should not be overlooked and can be crucial to helping you feel more comfortable and in control. As we know, there can be many emotional symptoms associated with the menopause and additional stress can make these symptoms worse.



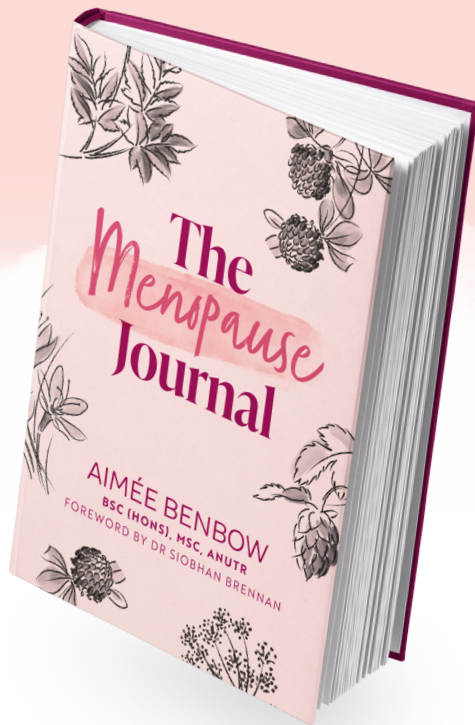
The Next Best Step

Menopause is a normal part of life which will affect everyone differently. This booklet has highlighted some of the healthful, natural ways to manage the changes it can bring. An unprocessed and vegetable rich diet, combined with regular physical activity, are positive steps to improve health at this time and into the years beyond.

Don't be afraid to ask a health professional for help and in particular to head to your local independent health store where the staff can advise on natural support and positive lifestyle modifications. Health stores will empower you to choose your own wellness strategies that work for you.

This booklet is an extract from The Menopause Journal by Aimee Benbow.

Manage Your Menopause



Track, Target & Thrive
With The Menopause Journal

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About the author

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Aimée is the Head of Nutrition at Viridian Nutrition and graduated from the University of Surrey with a BSc in Nutrition and an MSc in Nutritional Medicine. She has worked in both the supplement and food industries in an educational role and specialises in quality control and innovation.

**Aimée is also the author of
The Menopause Journal**



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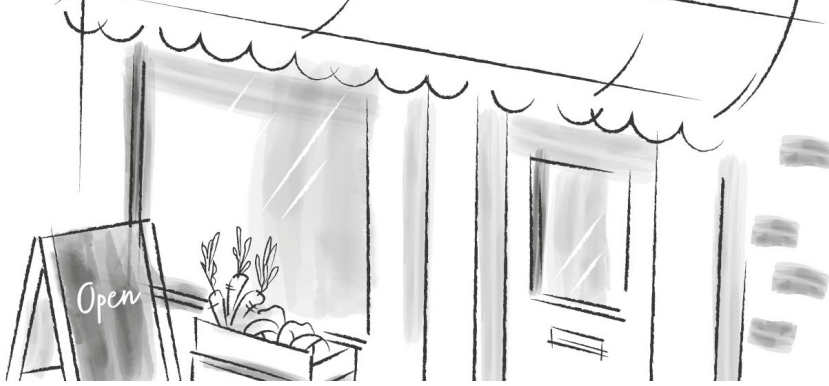
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- We Love Health Stores -

Choosing the right supplement programme for your personal needs can be confusing. Allow the staff at your local specialist health store to take you through the vitamin maze, where trained and knowledgeable advisors are on hand to develop the ideal programme of nutritional supplements just for you.

The Viridian Nutrition range is available from carefully selected health stores and specialist health counters worldwide. Health stores offer expertise, range and caring.

Where else would someone take you by the hand, offer a shoulder to cry on, a listening ear, a knowledgeable mind and kind heart?

If you have a particular health condition or concern, please first visit a health professional (a GP or a qualified practitioner) to ensure you have the correct diagnosis. Often with chronic health conditions, the health store will give excellent advice for dietary and lifestyle modifications, a supplement programme and possibly assistance from topical products.

Your nearest specialist health store:

The information contained in this booklet is not intended to treat, diagnose or replace the advice of a health practitioner. Please consult a qualified health practitioner if you have a pre-existing health condition or are currently taking medication.

Food supplements should not be used as a substitute for a varied and balanced diet.

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Menopause A5 Booklet



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