

Menopausal health: Sleep problems

Approximately 40–56% of menopausal women experience sleep problems during the menopausal transition, often exacerbated by hot flashes and night sweats.

Adequate sleep quantity and quality are essential for health; insufficient sleep is associated with reduced quality of life and increased risk of affective disorders, cognitive dysfunction, migraine, sexual dysfunction and cardiovascular disease.

Causes of sleep problems

- Vasomotor symptoms or other menopausal symptoms (e.g. nocturia, fibromyalgia)
- Mood changes (anxiety and depression)
- Hormonal changes, in particular thyroid hormone, estrogen and follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH)
- Chronic insomnia
- Restless legs syndrome
- Iron deficiency
- Sleep-disordered breathing (e.g. snoring, sleep apnea)
- Gastroesophageal reflux disease
- Lifestyle factors (e.g. alcohol, caffeine, smoking, excessive screen time)

More evidence is needed from randomized controlled trials and cohort studies to better understand the impact of menopausal sleep disorders and improve treatment.

Non-medical strategies to help sleep problems

- Following a regular **sleep schedule**
- Optimizing the **sleep environment**, for example by adjusting the room temperature and bedding
- Avoiding caffeine at night
- Cessation of smoking
- Limiting screen time

Medical interventions for sleep problems

Hormonal options

- Menopausal hormone therapy (MHT) to address vasomotor symptoms (oral micronized progesterone may provide superior sleep benefits compared with other progestogens)
- Melatonin

Non-hormonal options

- Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT)
- Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors or serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (off-label)
- Neurokinin antagonists (fezolinetant/ elinzanetant)
- Gabapentin
- Oxybutinin (for vasomotor symptoms and nocturia)

Further information

British Menopause Society (2025). Tool for clinicians managing sleep disturbance during the menopause transition <https://thebms.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/25-NEW-BMS-ToolsforClinicians-Managing-sleep-disturbance-AUGUST2025-A.pdf>