

# Preparing for Your Midlife Care Appointment



## 1. Find a provider that provides menopausal care.

- A. Start with your primary care provider.
- B. When you call to make the appointment, ask if your provider prescribes menopausal hormone therapy (MHT) or hormone replacement therapy (HRT).

The purpose of this question is to see whether your provider is comfortable providing menopausal care, regardless of whether you're interested in trying hormones.

### If no:

- Ask for a recommendation for another provider that provides menopausal care.
- Or go to <http://tinyurl.com/menopause-provider> to search for someone near you.

## 2. Prepare for your appointment.

- A. Check off any symptoms that you've noticed over the past few months, even those that come and go. If you have any symptoms that don't appear on the list, keep track of them, too.
- B. Put a star next to the symptoms that are most bothersome. This helps you prioritize the symptoms you want to talk about in your visit.

### Commonly discussed symptoms:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hot flashes, night sweats  | <input type="checkbox"/> Sleep problems, fatigue                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Long or short menstrual cycles, heavy or light flow, skipped periods | <input type="checkbox"/> Weight gain                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brain fog, forgetfulness, trouble concentrating                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Urinary incontinence, urinary tract infections |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Joint pain   | <input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety, depression, mood swings, irritability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decreased libido   | <input type="checkbox"/> Vaginal dryness and pain, breast tenderness    |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Headaches, migraines                           |

### Lesser-known symptoms:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced ability to recover from stress         | <input type="checkbox"/> Dry mouth, burning feeling in the mouth                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Panic attacks                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Tooth decay, gum disease                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Irregular heartbeat                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Tingling in the fingers or toes, electric shock feeling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hair loss, brittle nails, acne, dry/itchy skin | <input type="checkbox"/> Tinnitus  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Change in body odor                            |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bloating, digestive problems                   |  |

## 3. Things to say during your appointment.

A. I'm pretty sure I'm in perimenopause (if you still have periods) or menopause (if your periods have stopped). The most concerning symptoms I have are:

- a)
- b)
- c)

B. Here's what I've tried so far to manage my symptoms: (Mark anything you've tried and add notes to provide more detail.)

- ☐ Regular exercise \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ Improved sleep hygiene \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ Reduced or eliminated alcohol \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ Reduced or eliminated caffeine \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ Mindfulness (such as breathing exercises or meditation) \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ Drink more water \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ Improved nutrition \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ Over-the-counter supplements or creams \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ Therapy \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_
-

### C. Ask about options to manage symptoms.

- If you are interested in talking about menopausal hormone therapy, ask: I'm interested in trying menopausal hormone therapy. What would you recommend?
- If you are not interested in MHT, ask: I'm not interested in hormones because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ What would you recommend?
- If you want to have a general discussion, ask: What are my options?

### D. Ask for recommendations to reduce health risks due to decreasing hormones.

- Based on my medical history and family history, what else do you recommend I do now to improve my health outcomes in the future? (Examples: cholesterol, heart disease, osteoporosis.)
- For example, my understanding is that it's easier to prevent vaginal atrophy with estrogen than reverse it. Are there other things like this that I can try to prevent problems in the future?

### E. What kind of testing should we be considering?

### F. How will I know when I need to come back to see you?

## 4. What to do if your appointment doesn't go well.

There are many reasons why your appointment may not go as you hoped. If you aren't having the discussion you hoped to have, here are some things you can say to advocate for yourself:

- If you were me, what questions would you ask now?
- Thank you for your time. I'd really like to get a second opinion on this. Can you refer me to someone who specializes in menopausal care?

If you are hoping to try menopausal hormone therapy and your provider seems resistant:

- Can you tell me why you're reluctant to prescribe MHT based on my medical history and family history?
- Can you share more about why you want to start with another medication before trying MHT?
- I'm happy to try lifestyle recommendations such as exercise, sleep, nutrition, and stress reduction. Why do you feel I should try that before we look at other options?

You can also search The Menopause Society database for a provider:

<http://tinyurl.com/menopause-provider>

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