**Guide and Tips for how to talk to your GP about menopause**

If you are suffering from menopausal symptoms to the point they’re getting in the way of you enjoying life, it’s time to talk to your doctor. But, sometimes, that’s easier said than done.

We all know how difficult it can often be just to get an appointment, and then it’s often only ten minutes. And talking about symptoms can be hard, let alone if you feel rushed or unprepared. So, what can you do? Below are some helpful, straightforward tips to help you get the best from your appointment.

**Don’t wait**. Menopausal symptoms are a natural part of life, but if they are affecting you, there are things you can do, and support is available. There is no need to wait until symptoms feel unbearable.

**Read the NICE guidelines**. This stands for National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and these guidelines are what your doctor will use to determine the type of conversations to have with you and treatments to offer. There are guidelines for patients, which are really useful to read before you see your GP, so you know what to expect. The NICE guidelines can be found at <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/ifp/chapter/about-this-information>

**Prepare for your appointment.** It’s easier for your doctor to understand what’s going on if you provide them with all the information.

**Keep a list of all your symptoms**, your menstrual cycle, hot flushes, how you’re feeling, and any changes you’ve noticed. Write them down, and take them to your appointment. Your doctor will thank you for it, and it’s more likely that together, you’ll find the right solution faster. And, if you have any preferences about how you manage your symptoms, tell them that too – for example, if you’d like to try hormone replacement therapy (HRT), or not.

**Ask the receptionist which doctor** is best to talk to about menopause. They are often the font of all knowledge at a surgery, and can help you find the best person to speak to – it might not be your usual GP, it could be someone who has had special training in the subject.

**Ask for a longer appointment**. If you don’t think your standard appointment will be long enough, try to book a double appointment, as some surgeries do offer this.

**Don’t be afraid to ask for a second opinion**. If you don’t feel you’ve received the help you need, ask to speak to someone else. Don’t be put off, you know how you’re feeling, and how it’s affecting you.

**Ask if there is a menopause clinic in your area**. Occasionally, there are regional clinics, specifically devoted to menopause. If there is one in your area, and you think this would be helpful, ask for a referral.

**Take your partner or a friend with you**. The chances are, you spend your life supporting others and, during menopause, it’s your turn to ask them for support. Your partner, or a friend, will know how the symptoms are affecting you. They could support you at the appointment, and also find out how they can continue supporting you.

**What to expect from your doctor**

There are certain things a GP should – and should not – do during your appointment.

**They should:**

* Talk to you about your lifestyle, and how to manage both your symptoms, and your longer-term health;
* Offer advice on hormone replacement therapy and other non-medical options;
* Talk to you about the safety and effectiveness of any treatment.

**They should not:**

* Tell you that it’s just that time of your life. Yes, menopause is a natural stage, but please don’t feel that means you should have to put up with every symptom without help;
* Tell you they don’t prescribe HRT. It’s up to you what you want to try, and for them to say whether it could be right for you, depending on your medical history;
* Impose unnecessary time restrictions, such as they will only prescribe this once, or for a year or two. This is an ongoing conversation, and if your symptoms persist, you will still need help to manage them.

**Remember, your GP is there to help and support you, and you should feel comfortable and confident in talking to them about your symptoms, and any help you need. Don’t think you have to struggle through menopause when there is help and support available.**