

# Global toolkit to diagnose menopause

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Created at Monash University, the world's first toolkit is designed for GPs to use with women from the age of 40. Thought to be the first of its kind, researchers say the toolkit has the potential to help manage menopausal conditions for women globally.

The Practitioner Toolkit for Managing the Menopause, which includes a [diagnostic tool](#), as well as a compendium of approved hormone therapies, is published today in the journal, *Climacteric*.

Led by Professor Susan Davis, the research team from the School of Public Health and Preventative Medicine, combined existing research on [menopause](#), diagnostic algorithms and extensive clinical experience to develop the diagnostic tool. Designed for use in a GP surgery, it also works through a patient's medical history and risk factors to arrive at the best treatment solution.

Professor Davis said the toolkit fills the void of clear guidelines on menopause diagnosis and management, equipping doctors with the fundamentals to care for any woman who walks through the door.

"There are many detailed guidelines available on menopause but the reality is that most GPs don't have the time to work through a 40 page report when they only have 5 or 10 minutes with a patient," Professor Davis said.

"Based on feedback from patients and doctors we realised there's widespread confusion, not only in how to determine when menopause

starts but also prescribing appropriate treatment to help with side effects.

With many recent medical graduates receiving little training in this area, we realised there was a clear need for simple and practical guidelines," she said.

Menopause, also known as 'the change of life', marks the end of the monthly cycle of menstruation and reproductive years in a woman's life. Most women reach menopause between the ages of 45 and 55.

Professor Susan Davis said due to hormonal changes, [menopausal symptoms](#), which include hot flushes, anxiety and depression and joint pain, vary widely from none at all to debilitating, making a straightforward diagnosis difficult.

"Half the world's population will experience menopause at some point in their lives, yet there isn't a commonly used diagnostic tool and that's creating confusion amongst women and doctors," Professor Davis said.

"Many people think the menopause is the same for every woman but the reality is quite different. Every woman has her own individual experience of menopause and that sometimes makes it tricky to diagnose," she said.

The free resource includes a flow chart of standardised questions for doctors to ask, and assess women who are potentially experiencing menopause. The kit also flags safety concerns, provides a list of all hormone therapies approved by regulators in different countries and lists non-hormonal therapies that have evidence to support their use.

Professor Davis said the toolkit would also help inform GPs and patients on the benefits and risks of menopausal treatment.

"Hormone therapy is commonly prescribed to women, but its success varies according to symptom type and severity, personal circumstances and medical background.

"This toolkit has the potential to change that because it's designed to work as just as well for a 41 year old woman in Madras as it will for the 48 year old in Manhattan," said Professor Davis.

The International Menopause Society (IMS) is promoting the use of the toolkit throughout the world, stating that it is the first to present structured practical advice.

IMS President, Rod Baber said the toolkit builds on formal guidelines on menopause.

"This will ensure that each individual woman is well informed about what happens to her as she ages, about what options for treatment and monitoring are available and lastly what [menopausal hormone therapy](#) options are," said Rod Baber.

General Practitioner Dr Jane Elliott said the toolkit was clear and accessible, making it ideal to use for GP consultations.

"The flow-chart should be on the computer desk top of all GP's. This will go a long way towards helping busy GP's feel that managing menopause is no longer in the 'too hard basket' and women will benefit as a result," Dr Elliot said.

Leading Endocrinologist and President of the Australasian Menopause Society, Dr Anna Fenton welcomed the introduction of the toolkit, recommending widespread use amongst health practitioners.

"In an area fraught with myths and misinformation, this toolkit provides

concise and accurate information. The key messages are clear and the advice is practical and evidence-based. Many women are confused and uncertain about how best to deal with the menopause. Doctors can also face uncertainty in how best to treat and support patients with menopausal symptoms. This [toolkit](#) has the potential to change that," Dr Fenton said.

**More information:** The Practitioner Toolkit for the Managing the Menopause will be available to download for free from *Climacteric* from Monday 7 July.

Provided by Monash University

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