

Cognitive behavior therapy shown to improve multiple menopause symptoms

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Although hormone therapy (HT) is the most commonly recommended treatment for menopause symptoms, research is ongoing for alternatives, especially nonpharmacologic options. Cognitive behavior therapy has

previously been proposed as a low-risk treatment for hot flashes, but a new study suggests it may also effectively manage other menopause symptoms. Results are published online today in *Menopause*, the journal of The North American Menopause Society (NAMS).

Women today have more options than ever before when it comes to the treatment of common menopause symptoms such as [hot flashes](#), depression, sleep disturbances, and sexual function. Because of its proven effectiveness, HT still leads a long list of available treatment options. However, controversies regarding the adverse effects of HT have prompted some women to seek other options. Alternative treatments such as antidepressants have proven effective in treating menopause-related depression and, to a lesser extent, hot flashes. But these options can also have adverse effects.

Cognitive behavior therapy is a type of psychotherapy that teaches patients how to modify dysfunctional emotions, behaviors, and thoughts and to develop personal coping strategies. It has proven effective in multiple studies in the treatment of various mental health difficulties such as depression and anxiety. Previous studies relative to menopause symptoms, however, have focused only on its ability to manage hot flashes. This new study is the first of its kind to address a broad range of common physical and psychological menopause symptoms.

The study demonstrated that [cognitive behavior therapy](#) significantly improved hot flashes, depression, sleep disturbances, and sexual concerns, although little improvement was seen in anxiety. Moreover, the improvements were maintained for at least 3 months posttreatment. Although a small study, it lays the foundation for future research focused on how various psychological treatments may help the millions of women who suffer with [menopause symptoms](#).

Findings were published in the article "Cognitive behavior therapy for

[menopausal symptoms](#): a randomized controlled trial."

"This small study is in line with other studies of menopausal women showing a benefit of cognitive behavior therapy in improving hot flashes. It additionally demonstrated an improvement in depression, sleep, and sexual function," says Dr. JoAnn Pinkerton, NAMS executive director. "Larger trials comparing cognitive behavior therapy to other active treatments will help us to better understand how effective this therapy will be in highly symptomatic women."

More information: Cognitive behavior therapy for menopausal symptoms: A randomized controlled trial. *Menopause* 2019.

Provided by The North American Menopause Society

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