

Mood swings, memory troubles: Minding the mental toll of menopause

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Menopause and the years before it may make you feel like you're losing

your mind.

Some of those feelings are changes that occur naturally in this stage of life, but other factors contribute, too, according to the [North American Menopause Society](#) (NAMS), which offered tips to achieve some peace.

Changes in hormones are a big reason for the [mood swings](#) and other symptoms. While most women are accustomed to their own hormonal rhythm, it gets disrupted during perimenopause, the years before a woman's periods stop for good, according to NAMS.

Part of it is just timing—that these [physical changes](#) are happening along with other midlife stresses, such as relationship issues, divorce or widowhood. For some women, those stresses include caring for [young children](#), struggles with teens, the return of grown children to the home or being childless. Career, education and aging parents may add to this strain.

Women in midlife also may be living with changes in [self-esteem](#) or [body image](#) because society values youth, NAMS suggested in a news release.

One way to feel better is to create balance. Remember to take care of your own needs, not just those of family and work. This can help you meet new challenges and maintain self-confidence.

If you experienced depression when younger, you're more vulnerable to those feelings during perimenopause.

Depression is associated with a chemical imbalance in the brain. Notice if you are experiencing prolonged tiredness, loss of interest in normal activities, weight loss, sadness or irritability, the experts at NAMS said.

Seek out [prescription medications](#) from your doctor or talk therapy from a mental health professional. Medication for depression is most effective when used in tandem with counseling or psychotherapy.

You may also experience increased feelings of anxiety, which might feel like anticipation, dread or fear. Though they may resolve on their own, frequent episodes may be a warning sign of panic disorder, NAMS said.

Symptoms can include [shortness of breath](#), [chest pain](#), dizziness, heart palpitations or feelings of "going crazy." The feelings that come before a hot flash can mimic or trigger an attack. Treatments include relaxation or stress reduction techniques, psychotherapy and prescription medications.

If you're concerned about maintaining your memory, stay active physically, socially and mentally. Many perimenopausal women report difficulty concentrating or short-term memory problems, NAMS noted.

Don't try to diagnose and treat yourself. Reach out to your doctor for help, the group advised.

More information: The Office on Women's Health has more on [menopause](#).

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