

# How tracking menopause symptoms can give women more control over their health

August 18 2023, by Deborah Lancaster

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Menopause can cause more symptoms than hot flashes alone. And some of your symptoms and reactions might be due to the menopause, even if you are still having periods. Research shows that keeping track of those symptoms can help to alleviate them.

People sometimes talk about the menopause as though it were a single event that happens when you are in your early 50s, which is [the average time](#) to have your last period. But the menopause generally stretches between the ages of 45 and 55. And some women will experience an earlier "medical" menopause because of surgery to remove the womb or ovaries.

The menopause often happens at one of the busiest times of life. You might have teenagers at home or be supporting grown-up children, have elderly parents, be employed and have a great social life. If you feel exhausted, hot and bothered, irritable and can't sleep well, you might be tempted to think that it is because you never get a minute's peace. But that is why monitoring [symptoms](#) is important.

[My team recently tested](#) the effects of tracking symptoms and emotions during the menopause. We asked women to rate 30 physical and 20 emotional symptoms of the menopause.

The physical and [psychological symptoms](#) included poor concentration, problems with digesting food, stress and itchy skin, as well as the obvious symptoms like hot flushes and night sweats. Women tracked [positive emotions](#) like happiness and contentment, and negative emotions like feeling sad, isolated and angry.

There were two groups of women in this study. One group recorded their symptoms and emotions every day for two weeks. The other group recorded their symptoms and emotions once at the beginning of the fortnight and once at the end.

The results showed that the women who monitored their symptoms and emotions every day reported much lower [negative emotions](#), [physical symptoms](#) and loneliness at the end of two weeks than at the beginning, compared to the other group.

As well as this, although the loneliness scores of the group who monitored every day were lower than the other group, women in both groups said that being in the study and thinking about symptoms helped them feel less lonely. Simply knowing that other women were having similar experiences seemed to help.

One participant said, "I feel more normal that other women are doing the same survey and are probably experiencing similar issues, especially the emotional and mental ones."

## **Why does monitoring symptoms help?**

One reason why tracking might help is that rating symptoms can help you notice changes and patterns in how you feel. This could encourage you to seek help.

Another reason is that noticing changes in symptoms might help you link the change to what you have been doing. For example, looking at whether symptoms spike after eating certain foods or are better after exercise. This could mean that you change your behavior in ways that improve your symptoms.

Many menopause symptoms are known as "non-specific" symptoms. This is because they can also be symptoms of mental health, thyroid or [heart problems](#). It is important not to think your symptoms are "just" the [menopause](#). You should always speak to your doctor if you are worried about your health.

Another good thing about monitoring symptoms is that you can take information about how often you experience symptoms and how bad they are to your GP appointment. This can help the doctor decide what might be the problem.

Websites such as [Health and Her](#) and [Balance](#) offer symptom monitoring tools that can help you track what is happening to your physical and emotional health. There are several apps you can use on your phone, too. Or you might prefer to note symptoms and how bad they are in a notebook every day.

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