

# Taking care of your mental health in Menopause

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## Menopause and Mental Health

Menopause is a significant life transition but has been cloaked in silence and secrecy for many years, only becoming a mainstream topic very recently. Menopause can have an impact on a person's sense of self, on their mental health and their overall wellbeing. Menopause is a very individual experience, marked by a spectrum of physical and psychological symptoms. Symptoms vary significantly in duration and severity.

Psychological symptoms, often less spoken about, can include anxiety, irritability, brain fog, panic attacks, feeling low, feeling frustrated, tearfulness, loss of self-esteem and loss of confidence. These cognitive and emotional symptoms can be treated.

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On-duty EAO available at 0818 008120  
Monday - Thursday: 9am - 5.15pm  
Friday: 9am - 5pm  
Appointments are available evening  
and weekends if required

Email: [cseas@per.gov.ie](mailto:cseas@per.gov.ie)  
[www.cseas.per.gov.ie](http://www.cseas.per.gov.ie)

Although Menopause is a natural stage in the ageing process, knowing what to expect is useful when developing a self-care plan. We know that feelings of sadness and anxiety are part of life. They are normal feelings. However in perimenopause, menopause, and indeed post-menopause, these feelings can move outside of the normal range of what we are familiar with.

If you experience debilitating anxiety, panic attacks and/or very low mood or any change in your mental health, do consider seeking professional advice from your GP, a menopause specialist or the CSEAS. There are many treatment options available.

**Having a personal self-care plan can be a great resource in looking after your mental health in menopause.**

**CSEAS: Health and Wellbeing Resource page:**  
[www.cseas.per.gov.ie/health-and-wellbeing](http://www.cseas.per.gov.ie/health-and-wellbeing)

**CSEAS Introduction to Mindfulness Leaflet**  
[www.cseas.per.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/Introduction-to-Mindfulness.pdf](http://www.cseas.per.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/Introduction-to-Mindfulness.pdf)

### **Note your symptoms**

Remember that you know what is normal for your mental health. If you are experiencing low mood and/or anxiety or a change in your mental health which is causing you distress, write down your symptoms. Make a note of how you are feeling. Reach out for help if psychological or physical symptoms of menopause are disrupting your personal relationships and/or your working life.

If you are feeling anxious, remember our thoughts are not facts and are only one perspective on a situation. Notice the difference between worry that is functional, which is often bringing your focus to something that needs attention, and worry that is not. We all have functional worries which are real and are helpful to us.

Some useful exercises to try when you are feeling anxious:

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## Approach anxiety through the body and the senses.

- Try not to label anxiety as a 'bad' thing. This can help in changing your relationship to anxiety.
- Notice your thoughts. If you are aware of a feeling or internal state, try to name it without judging this as good or bad
- Try to bring your attention to noticing where you feel this in your body. Is it your chest? Your stomach or your throat?
- Pay attention to your breathing, breathing in to the count of 4 and out to the count of 6.
- Try this for 3 or 4 times and you might notice that you feel stronger and a little calmer. Attending to the breath helps give the message to your mind that you are ok.
- When you are feeling more regulated you can focus more effectively.

## The 5 Senses Exercise

This exercise is grounding, supports your awareness and only takes a few moments. Count down from 5. Gently notice your breathing

- **Notice 5** things that you can see right now. Notice the colours and shapes. Be aware of a sense of movement or stillness.
- **Notice 4** things that you can hear right now. The furthest away sound that you can hear, what sounds in the room do you notice?
- **Notice 3** things that you can touch in this moment. What do they feel like? Is the texture soft or rough? It could be your clothes against your skin. The feeling of touching your hands.
- **Notice 2** things that you can smell
- **Notice 1** thing you can taste

And then bring your attention to your breath, taking a slow breath in through your nose and a long breath out as if you are blowing out a candle.

## Pace yourself and take breaks

Pacing yourself is a very useful approach to managing your energy. Don't wait until you are exhausted to take a break. Take a five minute break at least once an hour. Notice your breathing and bring your awareness to your body. This gives you a chance to slow down a little, create a pause and allow for difficult feelings during this time. They are telling you that need to look after yourself.

Talk to your manager or a supportive colleague about needing to pace yourself due to menopausal symptoms.

## CSEAS Leaflet: Understanding Menopause and Improving Menopause Support in the Workplace

### Encourage Self compassion

Notice the way you speak to yourself. What kind of language do you use? Are you very judgemental towards yourself? Do you see yourself in a negative light, perhaps seeing yourself as not good enough or are consumed with self-doubt? If you notice this is happening, consider how you might speak to a good friend who is experiencing the same symptoms. Be aware of the internal language that you use towards yourself.

These small steps can make a big difference in managing stress and taking care of yourself at this time.

### CSEAS Menopause Support Page:

[www.cseas.per.gov.ie/the-menopause](http://www.cseas.per.gov.ie/the-menopause)

## Menopause in the Workplace Policy Framework

## Guidance on Understanding and Improving Menopause Support in the Workplace

## HSE booklet: Exploring the Mental Health Impact of Menopause and Perimenopause

Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (HQ)  
Department of Public Expenditure and Reform  
4th Floor, St. Stephen's Green House,  
Earlsfort Terrace,  
Dublin 2, DO2 PH42, Ireland  
Tel: 0818 008120

Email: [cseas@per.gov.ie](mailto:cseas@per.gov.ie)  
[www.cseas.per.gov.ie](http://www.cseas.per.gov.ie)