Trusted Information Creator
Patient Information Forum

NHS
University Hospitals of Leicester
NHS Trust

Early Menopause post Bone Marrow Transplant

Bone Marrow Transplant

Information for Patients

Produced: June 2026
Review: June 2029
Leaflet number: 2039
Version: 1

Introduction

After a stem cell transplant, the treatment you received may have affected your ovaries. This can reduce fertility and may cause an early menopause or Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI). Menopause usually happens between the ages of 45 and 55. It is when periods stop and natural pregnancy is no longer possible because the ovaries stop releasing eggs.

If menopause happens between 40 and 45 years old, it is called early menopause. If it happens before age 40, it is called POI. Some treatments, such as chemotherapy and total body irradiation (TBI), can cause this.

After a stem cell transplant, menopause can happen suddenly. The symptoms can sometimes be mistaken with treatment side effects. This can feel upsetting, but your medical team is there to support you.

What do the ovaries do?

The ovaries make hormones, (oestrogen, progesterone and testosterone), as well as eggs that are released halfway through the menstrual cycle. These eggs can be fertilised with sperm which can lead to pregnancy. If the ovaries are damaged this can no longer happen and hormone and egg production stops. When these hormones are no longer produced, there are a variety of symptoms that can appear.

What does oestrogen do?

Oestrogen helps to keep the vagina healthy and comfortable and keep your bones strong. Low oestrogen levels can cause a variety of symptom's including vaginal dryness, weight gain, bloating, weaker bones and problems with concentration.

Oestrogen also impacts your heart health and low levels may increase your risk of coronary heart disease.

Oestrogen can also play an important role in how the brain works. This includes functions such as perception, attention, decision making, understanding language and memory.
It can be especially hard to recognise these changes after a stem cell transplant, because they may be mistaken for “chemo brain” or general “brain fog”. If you develop POI, it may also increase your risk of dementia later in life.
Common symptoms of menopause and POI

- Periods stopping or becoming irregular
- Mood swings or anxiety
- Headaches
- Hot flushes and night sweats
- Bone and joint pain
- Weight gain or bloating
- Heart palpitations
- Vaginal dryness
- Pain during sex
- Reduced interest in sex
- Difficulty sleeping
- Poor concentration or memory

You may find that some symptoms improve with simple lifestyle changes. These can include eating a balanced diet, staying active, getting enough sleep, managing stress, and reducing alcohol and tobacco use.

Diet

A healthy, balanced diet can help reduce weight gain and improve your mood. Some research suggests that a low fat, plant-based diet may ease menopausal symptoms as effectively as HRT.
Vitamin D is important for keeping bones healthy. Most of it is made in the body when your skin is exposed to sunlight, but it can also be found in foods such as oily fish and eggs. Some people may benefit from taking a vitamin D supplement, but it’s best to speak with a healthcare professional first to check whether it’s right for you.
Calcium and magnesium help keep bones strong and may also support better sleep and mood. Magnesium is found in foods such as Magnesium - Dark green leafy vegetables, nuts and seeds, whole grains.
Calcium- can be found in foods such as milk and dairy products, leafy green vegetables, fish with edible bones (like sardines), lentils, nuts, seeds, and whole grains.

Exercise

Regular exercise can help to strengthen bones improve mood and sleep and boost energy levels. Activities such as yoga, Pilates, Tai Chi, may ease joint pain support mental wellbeing.
Other helpful activities include walking, running, swimming, dancing.

Sleep

Hot flushes may interrupt sleep and waking frequently during the night may lead to fatigue. A sleep schedule can help –try going to sleep and getting up at the same time each day and avoid taking naps. Keeping your bedroom cool and wearing light cotton nightwear can also help. Avoid large or spicy meals before bed, reduce caffeine in the evening and limit screen time for at least an hour before bedtime.

Medication

For some women, lifestyle changes alone may be enough to manage menopausal symptoms. However, for most women with POI or early menopause hormone – based treatment is recommended until the average age of until natural menopause (around 52). This helps manage symptoms and reduces the risk of long-term complications such as bone loss and cardiovascular disease.
Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) replaces the hormones that fall during menopause. It can be taken as tablets, patches, gels, pessaries or a spray. Some women may also choose to use the combined oral contraceptive pill if pregnancy is still a possibility.
Alongside oestrogen and progesterone, testosterone levels may also decrease. This can lead to a reduced libido or lower sexual arousal. If this happens, a testosterone gel may be prescribed.

Genital Graft-Versus-Host Disease (GVHD)

Genital GVHD can be difficult to recognise because its symptoms can be similar to those of menopause. It's important to be aware of the symptoms listed below and to tell your doctors or nurses if you notice any of them. They can refer you to a specialist gynaecology team, who can carry out the right investigations and provide treatment to help improve your symptoms.
These are some of the symptoms to look out for:

- painful urination (feeling like you have a urinary tract infection)
- increased frequency of urination
- pain or bleeding on wiping
- vaginal discharge
- painful intercourse
- vaginal dryness (feeling sore or itchy) around your vulva and vagina

Further support

If you are experiencing any symptoms or have any concerns at any stage following your stem cell transplant, Please contact the Cellular Therapy Suite:0116 258 5124

If you are further along in your recovery and are under the care of the Late Effects Service, your GP will also be able to provide advice and support.

Additionally, you can find resources and peer support via:

Anthony Nolan - www.athonynolan.org

Daisy Network - www.daisynetwork.org

Menopause Matters - www.menopausematters.co.uk

Women's Health Concern - www.womens-health-concern.org

Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice
Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals.
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہِ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।
إذا كنت ترغب في الحصول على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أُخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો.

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead
or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email uhl-tr.equalitymailbox@nhs.net

We are a research hospital and you may be asked to take part in research

Re-use of this leaflet is restricted by Creative Commons license