



## Menopause – what support can I get from Equipsme?

The menopause is making headlines over and over again as women (finally) start talking about what happens to their bodies as they get older – and start demanding more understanding and support.

The menopause occurs when a woman stops having periods for a year or more. After that year, she's post-menopausal. And for years beforehand, she can be perimenopausal.

In perimenopause you get all the symptoms associated with The Menopause, but you still get to have periods too (even if they're a bit erratic). Those symptoms can include old well-known classics such as night sweats, hot flushes, and mood swings, but also things like insomnia, loss of sex drive and pain during sex, brain fog, concentration issues, joint pain, insomnia, heart palpitations, headaches, depression, anxiety and more - all of which aren't as well recognised and can be very difficult to put together.

Part of the problem is that women have for years had anything associated with 'women's issues' dismissed by medical professionals, employers and even partners as part of just being female. The gender health gap is very real. Physical issues like endometriosis and mental health issues like bipolar disorder have been routinely missed or minimised – with menopause one of the most disbelieved and taboo 'women's issues' of all.

Fortunately, the red tide is turning. Women are talking about the menopause, and doctors and workplaces are starting to listen.

If you think you're going through the menopause, or you know someone who is, your Equipsme plan can help YOU get the support you need.

### How your Equipsme plan can help you with the menopause

#### 1. Blood tests

One way to establish whether or not your hormone levels indicate that you're menopausal is through a blood test. They're not always 100% accurate as your hormone levels change throughout the month, but they can be a useful diagnosis tool to indicate when there might be changes and why.

Equipsme members have access to blood tests and health checks through our partners at Thriva, and get a £10 discount on any additional test you wish to buy, including the female hormones blood test. This checks things like oestradiol levels (a type of oestrogen), testosterone, luteinising hormone (LH), and follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) levels. It also checks thyroid function, which can also cause hormonal imbalances.

Log onto your Equipsme members portal, find the Health Check icon on your benefits page in order to get your discount code. You can then log onto your Thriva portal here and order your test direct. It will come with all the instructions to take your own blood with a simple finger prick, and once you send it off your results come through online within a few days.



**Equipsme members who have diagnosis as part of their plan could get an open referral to an AXA Health specialist through their new 'Menopause Pathway'.**

## 2. GP Service

If you're struggling to get in to see your own GP, or you're not getting useful advice when you get there, it's time to contact the Equipsme GP service, provided by Health Hero. They can help you discuss your symptoms thoroughly and get a plan together for next steps. That might be going back to your own GP armed with new information and insight, or getting an open referral to see a specialist (if diagnosis is included on your plan).

## 3. Referrals

If you're having gynaecological issues related to the menopause and need further investigation, people with diagnosis as part of their plan can now get an open referral to an AXA Health specialist through their new Menopause Pathway. The referral can be from your own GP, or from the Equipsme GP service.

This is big news because menopause is often excluded from private medical insurance. While you still can't use your Equipsme plan for routine menopause management and AXA Health will need to assess if the claim is eligible (ie, not pre-existing or otherwise excluded) - you CAN use it for diagnosis and get to see someone from a network of recognised AXA Health specialists accredited with the British Menopause Society. Many of these specialists offer remote consultations, offering greater flexibility and access to care.

## 4. Stress support

Don't underestimate how much menopause symptoms can impact your mental health. If stress support is part of your plan, please do give them a ring. The team of specialists are there to help you with tricks and tools to manage your mood swings, understand your triggers, and overcome your overwhelm. It's free, it's confidential, and it can even extend to face-to-face sessions if they're needed.

## 5. Nurse support line

Don't forget that even if you don't have stress support, there's still a team of medical professionals at the other end of the phone if you need them. AXA's Health at Hand helpline includes nurses and even pharmacists, who can help you talk through your symptoms, and even how to manage any HRT medications you're prescribed.

## And finally...

If you ARE prescribed HRT from any doctor, it's worth knowing that you can save money on your NHS prescription by buying an annual HRT pass for £19.30 a year. It's not a widely known scheme, but it could help you or someone you know afford the medication you or they need.

# equipsme

## Company information

Equipsme Insurance Services Ltd is a limited company registered in England & Wales with registered number 10674676.

## Our registered office

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## Regulatory information

Equipsme Insurance Services Ltd is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority, FCA registered number 786472.



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