

Alternatives to HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy)

HRT does not suit everyone, and some people look for alternatives to use instead of or to complement the HRT they are taking. This is an overview of some of these alternatives.

If you are considering using any of these alternatives, then you should speak to your medical practitioner as herbal and alternative remedies can interfere with prescribed medications.

Herbal remedies

Beware of false claims made about herbal remedies, they have not gone through the same regulation as conventional medicines. Also, herbal remedies do not always contain the same amount or quality of product, so it is advisable to check the quantity of the ingredients before purchase. As herbal remedies can do good, they can also have adverse effects.

NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) studied all herbs that have been claimed to help with (peri)menopause symptoms. They recommend that the THR (traditional herb register) is checked before using an herbal remedy.

Of the non-hormonal therapies, isoflavones or black cohosh have been shown to be helpful.

Type	Benefits	Further information
St John's Wort	May reduce hot flushes	Can interact with other medication
Red Clover	May reduce hot flushes	
Black Cohosh	May reduce hot flushes	

Medical advice should be sort before using any herbal remedies as they can react with other medications.

Acupuncture

There is limited evidence that acupuncture can help with (peri)menopausal symptoms. NICE only recommends considering acupuncture as a treatment option for such things as chronic pain such as tension-type headaches and migraines.

If you decide to try acupuncture, the NHS recommends that the acupuncture practitioner is either a doctor, nurse or physiotherapist or a member of a national acupuncture organization.

Other prescription medicines

Type	Benefits	Further information
Antidepressants	Can reduce hot flushes	Not licensed for this. NICE guidelines state that should not routinely be offered for (peri)menopause symptoms.
Clonidine	Can reduce hot flushes	Very little effect on hormonal symptoms. NICE guidelines state that it should not routinely be offered.

NICE recommends that for low mood due to menopause, HRT should be considered rather than antidepressants. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy can also be helpful for anxiety and low mood due to (peri)menopause.

CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy)

CBT is a type of talking therapy which aims to help people make changes to problematic ways of thinking and behaving. It can be helpful for some menopausal problems, including anxiety and stress, depressed mood, hot flushes and night sweats, sleep problems and fatigue.

Mindfulness

Practicing mindfulness can be helpful at keeping stress levels down which can be beneficial for helping to control some (peri)menopause symptoms.

Exercise

The NHS recommends that you consult your medical practitioner before taking on exercise for the first time.

Exercise is beneficial to both physical and mental wellbeing so it is a useful method to use to improve many (peri)menopause symptoms.

These are suggestions of exercise types:

- Yoga and Pilates (restorative exercise): Increases strength and flexibility.
- Weight bearing (strength exercise): Can improve bone strength, muscle mass and increase metabolic rate.
- Walking (steps): Can improve bone strength and is cardiovascular and supports heart health.

Bio-identical hormones

Bio-identical hormones are from plant sources, these are not recommended as the sector is not regulated and there is a lack of evidence as to how effective they are.