

Menopause and Different Cultures

We know that menopause is a very individual experience. This can be further impacted by intersectionality including being part of ethnic minority communities.

Different ethnic backgrounds can experience menopausal symptoms to a greater or lesser extent. This can make recognising and managing the menopause more challenging not only for the women themselves, but also for healthcare professionals. Women from some ethnic groups can start the menopause earlier than white women and the duration of their symptoms may vary¹.

Despite an awareness of these differences, there is a lack of research on how the menopause impacts women from different minority ethnic groups. The Fawcett Society² highlighted this but were able to report from a study that Asian migrant women had a similar experience to white women. Whereas a study in the USA found that African American, Asian-American, and Hispanic women were more likely to experience hot flashes than white women, while Hispanic and African American women were more likely to report depressive symptoms and difficulty sleeping.

Whilst informative, these findings do not consider lifestyle factors such as diet and exercise which can play a role in symptom management. Similarly, economic status also has an impact as women from poorer parts of society can face greater challenges during the menopause.

Attitudes towards menopause vary in different cultures and this may impact on symptom severity. This is also reflected in the language used to describe the menopause. In Japan, menopause is viewed as a natural life stage and the word for menopause is *konenki* which means renewal, season, and energy³. Conversely, the Urdu word for menopause means barren⁴. This terminology may cause shame about what is naturally happening in the body leading women to hide their symptoms and not seek help.

Women in ethnic minority groups may face further issues navigating the menopause due to racial discrimination either by healthcare professionals or in the workplace. Accessing information may be an additional challenge partly as material tends to address and reflect the experiences of white women. Secondly, because reading material may not be in their native language.

A way in which we can help ethnic minority women is to offer materials in different languages and formats reflecting cultural sensitivities in these resources as well as normalising conversations about the menopause and tackling harmful attitudes. Offering ethnic minority women the opportunity to speak to a healthcare professional from the same ethnic group or who speaks their native language would also be beneficial.

Additional resources

- [Why research and conversation about menopause is letting down Black and Asian people \(goodhousekeeping.com\)](https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/health/women/a1975747/why-research-and-conversation-about-menopause-is-letting-down-black-and-asian-people/)
- [Balance - Hindi Menopause Library \(balance-menopause.com\)](https://www.balance-menopause.com/)
- [Cultural Differences in Menopause \(themenopausecharity.org\)](https://www.themenopausecharity.org/)
- [Menopause Around the World \(mindsethealth.com\)](https://www.mindsethealth.com/menopause-around-the-world/)
- [Black Girl's Guide to Surviving Menopause \(blackgirlsguidetosurvivingmenopause.com\)](https://www.blackgirlsguidetosurvivingmenopause.com/)

¹ [Menopause and Culture - Norfolk Community Health and Care \(wearenchc.nhs.uk\)](https://wearenchc.nhs.uk/)

² [Menopause and the Workplace - The Fawcett Society \(fawcettsociety.org\)](https://www.fawcettsociety.org/)

³ [Menopause in Different Cultures - Women's Health Network \(womenshealthnetwork.com\)](https://www.womenshealthnetwork.com/)

⁴ [Menopause and the Workplace - Women and Equalities Committee \(parliament.uk\)](https://www.parliament.uk/)