

## GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP DURING MENOPAUSE.

75-85% of women suffer from hot flushes during menopause, this on its own unfortunately significantly reduces sleep quality and comfort. The reason behind why hot flushes appear is still under debate. Many link it to decreased oestrogen levels, which trick the hypothalamus (the temperature regulating region of the brain) into thinking that the body is overheating. The natural reaction from our body is to try to cool down, our blood vessels dilate and blood flow to the skin increases, which results in a flushed sweaty feeling. Every woman experiences different symptoms at different times. Don't assume your restless legs or night sweats can't be related to the menopause just because you have no other symptoms. Insomnia is another real problem for menopausal women, where up to 60% are impacted. Hormonal changes that take place at this time is a factor that contributes to insomnia as well as an increased risk of depression. However, there are several actions we can take, to improve our sleep.

1. You can talk to your doctor about natural solutions or discuss Hormone Replacement Therapy. If your doctor is not trained in this area, then ask for a second opinion. There are specialist menopause and hormone clinics available.
2. Food; some foods to **avoid** close to bedtime that make sleeping difficult are: -
  - Alcohol
  - Caffeine
  - Spicy foods
  - Chocolate
  - Tomatoes
  - Pizza
  - Citrus fruits
  - Foods difficult to digest
  - Large meals/portions

**Other foods** that are naturally high in melatonin, help us to sleep better. Melatonin is a sleep-inducing hormone. It regulates your sleep and awake cycle. More melatonin is produced when it is dark to help you sleep and less when it is light. **good** foods to try are: -

  - Warm milk
  - Pistachios
  - Tart cherries
  - Fatty fish
  - Rice
  - Goji berries
  - Oats
  - Mushrooms
3. Exercise, adding 20-30 minutes of low intensity workouts to your daily routine a few times a week, but not close to bedtime, can make a real difference to your sleep quality.
4. Follow a regular sleep schedule. Go to sleep and get up at the same time each day.
5. Develop a bedtime routine, such as read a book, listen to soothing music, or soak in a warm bath, and wear cool loose clothes.
6. Do not watch TV or use your computer or mobile device in the bedroom. The light from these devices makes it difficult for you to fall asleep
7. Bedroom, make sure that your bedroom is a haven. Keep it cool, well ventilated, dark, and as quiet as possible. You could also consider sleeping alone.
8. You could try mindfulness or meditation. Imagine your own secret tranquil place away from stress. A garden or deserted beach. Try to take your mind there and walk around your secret place. Concentrate on the gentle sounds and breath slowly and deeply to help you relax.