

The male menopause: genuine condition or moneymaking myth?

Level 2: Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. Discuss the questions.

1. What do you do to keep yourself healthy?
2. Do you think you will care for your health differently as you age? Why (not)?
3. What three top health tips might you give a friend?

2 Key words

a. Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text.

controversial	decline	depression	estrogen	lifestyle
menopause	muscle mass	ovary	policy	psychological
range	sudden	symptom	testosterone	

1. _____ happens when a woman is about 50 years old and she stops having her period.
2. A _____ is a plan agreed by a political party, business, or other organisation.
3. A _____ is a change in your body or mind that shows that an illness or other change is present.
4. _____ is a mental illness in which a person is very unhappy for a long time and doesn't have hope for the future.
5. _____ is the amount and weight of muscle in your body.
6. The _____ are a pair of organs in a woman's body that produce eggs.
7. _____ is a hormone produced by the testes that causes men to develop into men with male characteristics.
8. When something _____, it gradually becomes less and less.
9. _____ is a hormone produced by a woman's ovaries that causes them to develop into women and prepare their bodies to have babies.
10. Something _____ causes disagreement or angry discussion.

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Level 2: Intermediate

11. The upper and lower limits between which something varies is a _____.
12. Something _____ happens quickly and unexpectedly.
13. A person's _____ is how they live and work.
14. Something _____ is connected to a person's mind and the way it works.

b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity. You might have to change the form of the word.

1. What are some _____ of the flu?
2. _____ is a common mental health disorder which affects about 280 million people around the world.
3. Everyone was grateful when the number of Covid cases started to _____.
4. The new law was so _____ that they debated it for months.
5. The doctor said his cholesterol levels were in the normal _____.
6. The _____ change in temperature made everyone uncomfortable.
7. When she started getting hot flashes regularly, she knew that it was the _____.
8. During menopause, some women receive _____ therapy to help with their symptoms.
9. Artificially-high _____ levels can result in mood swings and aggressive behaviour.

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Nicola Davis

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- 1 There were recent reports of “male menopause” policies at several NHS trusts, with some HR managers suggesting staff could receive up to a year of sick pay if they have symptoms, even though the NHS itself says male menopause is not a medical condition and that it is not national NHS policy to offer leave for it.
- 2 **What is meant by the “male menopause”?**

The male menopause, also known as the andropause, is a term used to refer to a group of features seen in some men in their late 40s to early 50s, such as depression, problems sleeping and loss of muscle mass.
- 3 However, the NHS says, this is an “unhelpful term sometimes used in the media”.
- 4 **So, this isn’t a male version of what women go through?**

In a word, no.
- 5 Dr Ravinder Anand-Ivell, of the University of Nottingham and an expert of the European Academy of Andrology, says that the two are quite different.
- 6 How the ovaries function changes when the eggs are nearly gone “at around 50 plus or minus five years of age,” she explains, and this causes the symptoms of menopause. “Men have no equivalent.”
- 7 Prof Richard Sharpe, an expert from the University of Edinburgh, agreed and said that in normal men “blood testosterone levels decline with age from late 30s to early 40s onwards.” However, he notes that this can’t be compared to the sharp drop in estrogen levels in women during menopause.
- 8 Sharpe also stressed that what men experience can vary, “unlike the 100% occurrence of menopause in women,” he said.
- 9 **Does that mean the “male menopause” is made up?**

Not exactly.
- 10 “There is a condition in some elderly men, known as ‘late onset hypogonadism’ or more recently called ‘functional hypogonadism’,” said Anand-Ivell, which is when low testosterone in the blood together with symptoms of low testosterone such as bone and muscle weakness are present.
- 11 But, she added, this happens in approximately 2.1% of men, almost all over the age of 65.
- 12 While some men with late-onset hypogonadism (LOH) may benefit from testosterone replacement treatment, its wider use is controversial. Some experts have raised concerns that it is being given to patients with similar symptoms but with blood testosterone levels within the normal range.
- 13 “General symptoms will occur in most men during – and before – ageing but are almost always driven by other factors,” said Sharpe.
- 14 **So, what is behind these symptoms?**

Anand-Ivell said men who reported sudden symptoms, and at a younger age, might well have another health problem.
- 15 Indeed, features that have been linked to a “male menopause” could be because of lifestyle factors or psychological problems.
- 16 Financial and life worries may also play a role in the symptoms some men experience during ageing, as could poor diet and lack of sleep, the NHS notes.
- 17 Sharpe added that conditions such as obesity were also linked with lower blood testosterone levels in men, with some arguing it might lead to further weight gain.
- 18 As for treatment, Prof Frederick Wu of Manchester Royal Infirmary said the approach was: “Lifestyle change, weight loss and improve general health.”
- 19 **Why is the male menopause getting attention?**

Experts say a key reason the “male menopause” is a hot topic is money.

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- 20 Anand-Ivell said: "A lot of the 'andropause' literature stems from business interests, particularly in the USA ... in order to sell testosterone-related products for which there is no clinical evidence of benefit."
- 21 Sharpe said: "For myself, I am amazed that any health board would even talk about there being an andropause, let alone suggesting time off."

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3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. What were the recent reports at several NHS trusts about?
2. What does the NHS say about male menopause and their policies?
3. What does 'male menopause' or 'andropause' refer to?
4. What does the NHS say about this term?
5. How does Dr Anand-Ivell explain menopause in the article?
6. How often does menopause occur in women?
7. How often does 'late onset hypogonadism' or LOH occur in men?
8. According to the article, why might these symptoms in men occur?
9. What does Professor Wu recommend men do to treat those symptoms?
10. What is the key reason 'male menopause' is a hot topic?

4 Key language

a. Read these sentences from the article. Underline the modals for possibility. One sentence has two modals.

1. This can't be compared to the sharp drop in estrogen levels in women.
2. What men experience can vary.
3. Some men with late-onset hypogonadism (LOH) may benefit from testosterone replacement treatment.
4. Features that have been linked to a "male menopause" could be because of lifestyle factors or psychological problems.
5. Financial and life worries may also play a role in the symptoms some men experience during ageing, as could poor diet and lack of sleep.

b. Write four sentences using some of the modals above.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

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5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- “Creating a medical condition to make money is completely wrong.”
- “Women do not have enough access to care and leave for menopause.”
- “There should be policies against fake health claims in the media.”

6 In your own words

a. Do some research about menopause.

- What are some of the symptoms?
- What age are most women when it happens?
- Which countries offer sick leave and/or other support for menopausal women?

b. Report your findings to the class and share your opinion about the issue. Here are some phrases to help you when you talk about facts.

According to medical experts, ...

Their research showed ...

The doctors saw ...

The policy was about ...

They still need to learn more about ...

Here are some phrases to use when stating your opinion.

I think (that) ...

I want to understand why/how ...

From my point of view, ...

In my understanding/opinion, ...

I (still) have questions about ...