

THE VALUE OF OVER-THE-COUNTER PRODUCTS/SERVICES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF MILD-TO-MODERATE MENOPAUSAL SYMPTOMS



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Menopause and its associated symptoms

- 01** ✓
Menopause is often accompanied by varied and widespread symptoms with a large variety in severity and duration.
- 02** ✓
The majority of women experience mild-to-moderate menopausal symptoms; only around 10–20% experience severe symptoms.
- 03** ✓
Guidelines recommend menopause hormone therapy (MHT) as the first-line treatment, but **many women are averse to MHT, have contraindications, or experience mild symptoms that do not warrant MHT.**

Knowledge Gaps and Unmet Needs Surrounding Menopause

 WOMEN	➤ Often unprepared and lack awareness, knowledge and education and consequently remain untreated. ➤ >40% reported that they would never take MHT, and almost 80% would try alternative options first.	 CLINICIANS	➤ (incl. gynecologists) have also reported knowledge gaps and limited training and focus on menopause management. ➤ May feel uncertain about the appropriate OTC options.
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Evidence-based on OTC options

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International guidelines **do not recommend many OTC options** because of mixed or low-quality evidence.
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However, some meta-analyses, systematic reviews, and RCTs have indicated **evidence for efficacy and tolerability of some herbals** like black cohosh, hops, red clover, soy isoflavones and St. John's wort, suggesting that some women may benefit from them. **Dosage, plant material type and quality should be carefully considered** to increase the chance of success.
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CBT and clinical hypnosis have demonstrated strong evidence backed by guidelines. Strategies that improve accessibility, such as **digital health devices or medically approved applications**, could be advantageous.
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Vaginal moisturizers and lubricants are also strongly recommended as they can help with vaginal dryness and dyspareunia.

Authors key recommendations

- **Improve menopause education** for both **women and clinicians.**
- Signposting women to **accurate and trusted information is key.** Incorporating trustworthy digital applications in management strategies has been shown **to improve knowledge retention.**
- **A 3-step approach for women with mild-to-moderate symptoms who prefer to avoid prescription medications even after education about their benefit-risk profiles, the:**

- 1**  ➤ **Lifestyle changes** (e.g., exercise, weight loss, nutrition or behavioral modification) improve general health and wellbeing and can alleviate mild-to-moderate symptoms.
- 2**  ➤ **OTC options such as dietary/herbal products and behavioral therapies** should be considered.
- 3**  ➤ If symptoms continue or worsen, women may agree to consider **prescription medications** such as MHT, NK-receptor antagonists or antidepressants.

Conclusion

Increasing education for both women and clinicians and following this **3-step approach** can broaden access to management strategies and provide symptomatic relief to **a wide range of women experiencing mild to moderate menopausal symptoms.**

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