

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.

Evidence-based on OTC options



International guidelines **do not recommend many OTC options** because of mixed or low-quality evidence.



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.



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.



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:



Lifestyle changes

(e.g., exercise, weight loss, nutrition or behavioral modification) improve general health and wellbeing and can alleviate mild-to-moderate symptoms.

OTC options such as dietary/herbal products and behavioral therapies should be considered.

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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