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**Are women suffering in silence?  
New survey puts spotlight on significant impact of menopause despite recent guideline**

*Findings presented at the British Menopause Society's annual conference today show only half of women surveyed in Great Britain (who are currently experiencing or who have experienced menopausal symptoms within the past ten years) consult a healthcare professional for any of their menopause symptoms*

**London, 19 May 2016:** A new survey conducted by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the British Menopause Society (BMS) has revealed that one in two women in Great Britain (aged 45-65 who are currently experiencing or who have experienced menopausal symptoms within the past ten years) go through the menopause without consulting a healthcare professional.<sup>1</sup> This is despite women surveyed reporting on average seven different symptoms and 42% saying their symptoms were worse or much worse than expected.<sup>1</sup>

Today, more than 200 leading women's health experts will gather from around the world at the BMS's annual conference to discuss recent advances in menopause research, and the impact of the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guideline on addressing the often overlooked needs of women experiencing the menopause.

It was hoped that the recently published NICE guideline on the diagnosis and management of the menopause would encourage more women to seek help and access to safe and effective treatments. Worryingly however, only 3% of those surveyed had heard of the guideline.<sup>1</sup>

The online survey found that:

- Among those who have not consulted a healthcare professional for their menopause symptoms, more than a third (35%) believe it is something they should have to put up with<sup>1</sup>
- The majority of women surveyed experienced hot flushes (79%) or night sweats (70%), but many experienced symptoms they did not expect<sup>1</sup>
  - 22% of women surveyed experienced unexpected sleeping problems / insomnia, 20% difficulty with memory / concentration and 18% joint aches<sup>1</sup>
  - It is also interesting to note that 35% said they experienced vaginal dryness, with 18% of those experiencing this symptom saying it was unexpected<sup>1</sup>
    - *\*For a full list of symptoms experienced, please see footnote below.*
- The impact of these symptoms has been widespread with half of women surveyed saying their menopause symptoms have affected their home life, their social life (36%), and work life (36%)<sup>1</sup>



- 50% of women surveyed also reported that their sex life was affected, experiencing reduced libido (32%), reduced sex life (22%), painful or uncomfortable sex (16%) and 10% stopped having sex altogether.<sup>1</sup>

**Dr Heather Currie, Chairman, British Menopause Society said:**

“There is a common perception that the menopause is simply a few hot flushes lasting around two years, so the reality can come as quite a shock to many women. Women often feel powerless, because they believe there are limited treatment options and support available, and these fears and misconceptions have persisted from generation-to-generation.

“The publication of the NICE guideline represents a much needed first step towards ensuring excellent standards of care for the treatment of women experiencing the menopause. However, the survey demonstrates there is still extremely low awareness among women of the guideline and misconceptions around the menopause persist.

“We believe more needs to be done to educate women about the information and support available, which is why the British Menopause Society have developed some useful resources tailored for women to help them better understand their menopause symptoms and advice and treatments available.”

In the UK, the average age for menopause is 51 and one in 100 women will experience menopause prematurely under the age of 40.<sup>2</sup> An estimated 1.5 million (80%) will experience some symptoms, which typically continue for around four years, but can last up to 12 years or more.<sup>3</sup>

**Dr David Richmond, President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) commented:**

“For some women, menopausal symptoms can be extremely debilitating and dramatically impact upon their quality of life. This survey paints a concerning picture, given that many women are suffering from menopausal symptoms in silence – this should never be the case.

“Every woman’s experience of the menopause is different and we encourage women to talk openly to their healthcare professionals, employers, friends and families about the menopause. There is help and support available and the recently published NICE guideline provides both women and healthcare professionals with clear guidance and information about the menopause and how best to manage symptoms.”

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## NOTES TO EDITORS

### About the British Menopause Society

The British Menopause Society (BMS) is a specialist society affiliated to the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) and the Faculty of Sexual Reproductive Healthcare. It provides education, information and guidance to healthcare professionals specialising in all aspects of post reproductive health.

For more information, please visit the [British Menopause Society website](#).

To support women's understanding of the menopause, the BMS has launched a number of materials for both women and healthcare professionals clarifying some of the most common myths and misconceptions of the menopause, summarising the guideline, and providing guidance on HRT. These materials can be found at their website.

For health professionals, the BMS has also launched a number of resources on their new website, including:

- NICE's top ten messages and slide set
- A practical HRT prescribing guide
- A special post reproductive health issue with NICE summaries and expert commentaries

For additional resources, these can also be found at:

- <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23> – the NICE website offers a breakdown of the guideline on the diagnosis and management of menopause
- <https://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/> – for updated factsheets, confidential email and telephone advice, infographics, and video clips
- [www.managemymenopause.co.uk](http://www.managemymenopause.co.uk) – for tailored information to suit women's individual needs
- [www.menopausematters.co.uk](http://www.menopausematters.co.uk) – for information, online support groups and Menopause Matters – a menopause focused magazine

### Women's Health Concern

Women's Health Concern (WHC) became the patient arm of the British Menopause Society in 2012. It provides an independent service to advise, reassure and educate women of all ages about their health, wellbeing and lifestyle concerns.

### About the survey

On behalf of the BMS, Ipsos MORI conducted an online quota survey between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> April 2016. A nationally representative sample of 1,200 women aged 45-65 across Great Britain were surveyed (with quotas set on age, region and working status), of which 1,000 women reported they were currently experiencing menopausal symptoms or they had experienced menopausal symptoms in the past 10 years.

### What is the menopause?

The menopause refers to that time in every woman’s life when her periods stop and her ovaries lose their reproductive function. Usually, this occurs between the ages of 45 and 55. In the UK the average age is 51. In a few exceptional cases women may become menopausal in their 30s, or even younger. This is then known as a premature menopause, or premature ovarian insufficiency.<sup>2</sup>

For more information on the menopause, please visit the [Women’s Health Concern website](#).

### National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Guideline: Menopause

In November 2015, NICE launched the first guideline on menopause for women and health care professionals, which covers the diagnosis and management of menopause, including in women who have premature ovarian insufficiency. The guideline aims to improve the consistency of support and information provided to women in menopause.

For more information on the guideline, please visit the [NICE website](#).

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### References

1. The British Menopause Society: Data on file. Women's experience of menopause in Great Britain survey, 2016.
2. Women’s Health Concern. The Menopause Factsheet. Available online: <https://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/menopause/> Last accessed May 2016.
3. National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE). Press release: NICE issues first guideline on menopause to stop women suffering in silence. Available online: <https://www.nice.org.uk/news/press-and-media/nice-issues-first-guideline-on-menopause-to-stop-women-suffering-in-silence> Last accessed May 2016.

\*Full list of symptoms experienced by women surveyed:

Q2a. Which, if any, of the following symptoms have you experienced as a result of the menopause?	
Hot flushes	79%
Night sweats	70%
Sleeping problems / insomnia	57%
Change to the flow / frequency of your periods	54%
Mood changes (e.g. low moods)	52%
Weight gain	47%
Low energy levels	47%
Difficulty with memory and/or concentration	39%
Joint aches	38%
Loss of sex drive	37%
Vaginal dryness	35%
Increased urinary frequency or urgency	30%
Headaches	29%
Palpitations	26%
Pain during sex	13%
Other symptoms	4%