

Menopause Experiences: Opportunities for Improvement in Education and Healthcare

A Survey on Menopause Among Women Age 40-89

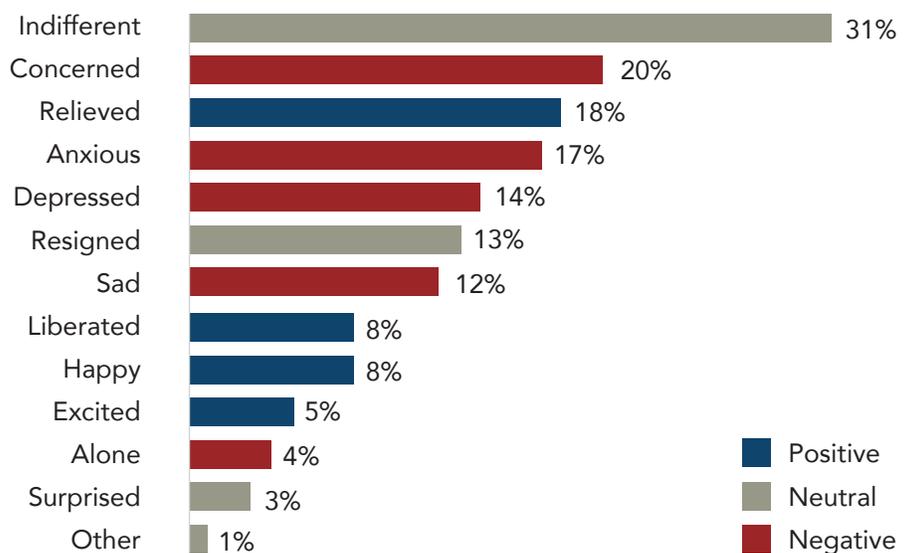
New survey on menopause demonstrates the diversity of women's experience in menopause as well as a need for greater education about the life stage, particularly in healthcare settings.

Women's experiences of menopause are diverse but it can be seen as a time of uncertainty for many.

Women have mixed emotions about entering menopause. While three in ten (31%) say they are indifferent to it. Nearly four in ten (39%) admit to experiencing one or more negative emotions around the event, be it concern (20%), anxiety (17%) or depression (14%).

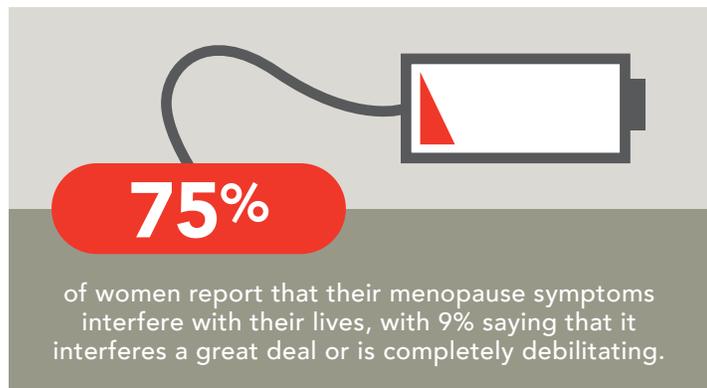


Feelings About Entering or Being In Menopause (among those who self-identify as being menopausal or premenopausal) (n = 521)



Note: multiple answer; percentages add up to greater than 100%

Most women will feel menopause's effects at some point. Over eight in ten (81%) women age 40-89 have experienced menopause symptoms, either in the past or currently. Most women report that their symptoms interfere with their lives, at least a little bit. Hot flashes (31%) are the top symptom among those currently symptomatic, followed by night sweats (26%) and vaginal dryness (25%). Feelings on treatment such as hormone therapy are mixed, with 27% feeling negatively about it and 21% neutral (6% report currently taking hormone therapy).

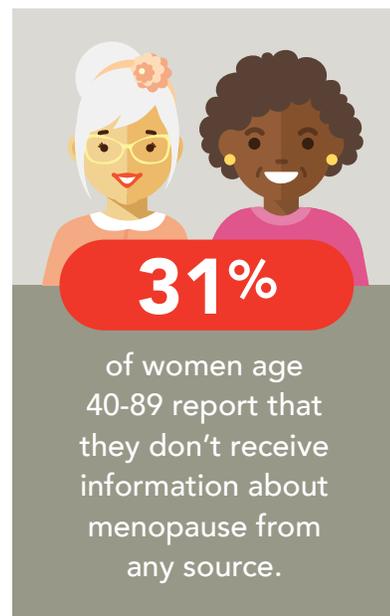


Top Five Currently Experienced Menopause Symptoms
(n = 1507)

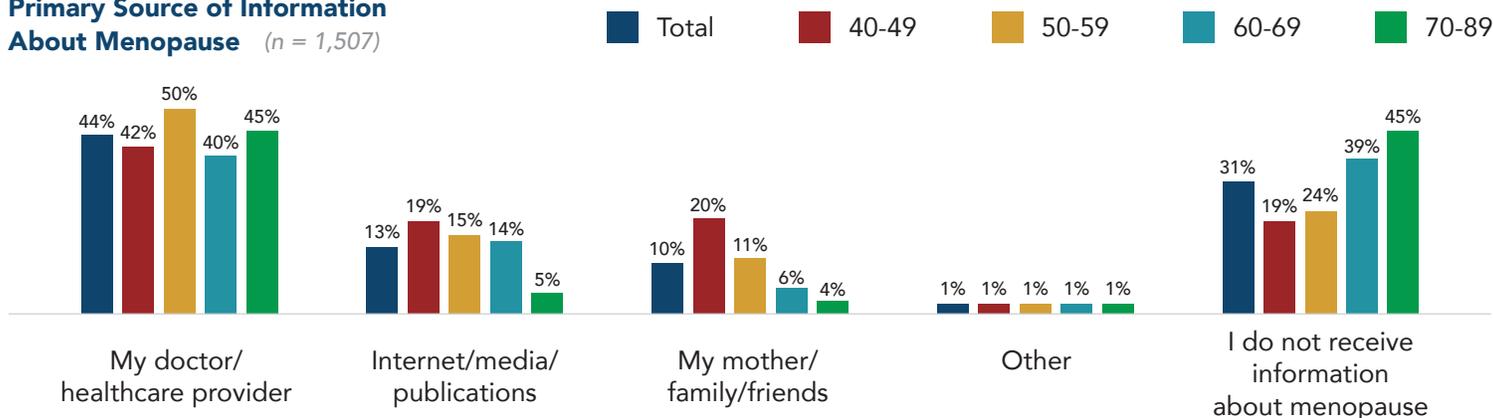


Many women lack information resources on menopause and are not talking about menopause with their healthcare provider.

Playing a critical role in these feelings of uncertainty is the lack of information around the condition. Close to a third (31%) of women age 40-89 report that they don't receive information from any source about menopause. Many women are similarly ignorant about menopause treatment options. When asked about their opinion on hormone therapy to treat menopause symptoms, 36% reported that they didn't know enough about it to have an opinion. Among those who do receive information about menopause, unsurprisingly, healthcare providers are their number one source (44%), followed by the internet (13%). Yet there is clearly more work to be done among providers to educate their patients—only 50% of women age 40-89 report ever having discussed menopause with their healthcare provider. This drops to just 35% among women age 40-49, the age cohort most likely to be experiencing perimenopausal symptoms.

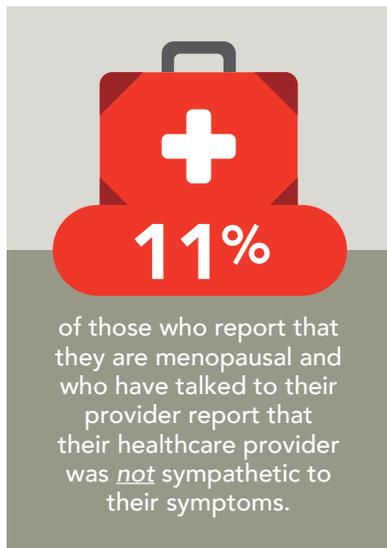


Primary Source of Information About Menopause (n = 1,507)

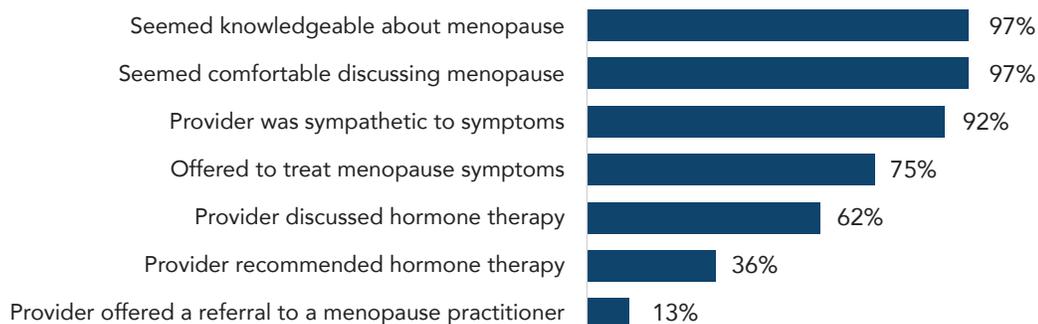


When women do talk to healthcare providers about menopause, their interactions have generally been positive.

Nearly all of the women who have discussed menopause with their healthcare provider say that the provider was knowledgeable about menopause (97%) and comfortable discussing it (97%). Moreover, doctors appear to be responsive to women's issues. Among those women who say they needed treatment for menopause symptoms, only 15% say they pursued treatment but did not receive it. Nonetheless, some women reported poor interactions with providers around menopause symptoms, and just under two-thirds (62%) say their provider discussed hormone therapy with them.



Healthcare Provider Interactions Around Menopause (among those who have talked to their healthcare provider about menopause) (n = 752)



Implications

Given that women can expect to spend a significant amount of their lives dealing with menopause symptoms, it is imperative that they are equipped with the knowledge and support to deal with them. The study findings reveal gaps in many women's educational resources about the condition and potential treatment options. Women have positive feedback about healthcare providers when menopause has been discussed with them, but it is clear that providers can offer better support for their patients by taking a more proactive role in menopause education.

Methodology

This online survey of 1,509 women age 40-89 was fielded in April 2018 using AARP's proprietary panel. The data are weighted by gender, race, age, Hispanic ethnicity, marital status, census division, age, and income to benchmarks from the March 2018 Current Population Survey (CPS). Raked weights are estimated using Random Iterative Method (RIM) weighting.