

Allison Ferns:

Menopause. Obviously, being perimenopausal, or menopausal, can be tough going at the best of times, but what is it like during a pandemic, during lockdown? That is why we thought we would have a chat today to Lorna Ive from Wadhurst. She is the founder of PeriMenoPost, and she joins me now.

Allison Ferns:

Hi, Lorna, thank you so much. I just thought it'd be really useful to get you on the show because there will be, well, I was going to say a lot of women dealing with this, but by its very nature, it means that their husbands, their partners are also dealing with this. And, obviously, it's already challenging, isn't it, being indoors 24/7 with your other half? And if you are somebody going through menopause at the same time, that's going to be tricky.

Lorna Ive:

Yeah. All of a sudden you're forced into a situation where your normal routine of how you cope with your menopause, if it's going out exercising, meeting your friends for support, or however. If you manage your menopause with alternative remedies or treatments, you're stuck. You're at home and you've got to try and look after yourself. So, it's just important really, I would just suggest to, if you can, try and get 20 minutes, 30 minutes of fresh air in the day, try and get out in the sunshine, in the garden, if you can. And also keep a journal of all your symptoms. If you're noticing that you're not sleeping properly, or you're getting hot flushes regularly, or your weight gain, or your moods, your sex drive, all those sorts of things, just keep a diary because the doctors are available and you can arrange to talk with consultants and doctors via Zoom, or phone video calls. So there is help out there for you-

Allison Ferns:

And that's a really important message, I think. And, in fact, we've heard it come up on more than one occasion at the government press briefing, that the NHS is still open. Whereas I think people might think, "Oh look, there's all this other stuff going on. They're not going to want to be bothering with little old me," but actually, the GP is still available. They are still there to offer advice.

Lorna Ive:

Yeah. Unfortunately, I had to go to A&E about two weeks ago with hormone issues actually, which I wasn't expecting. And I had to call 111, and I had to go into A&E. So, it was quite scary. And I thought, as you just mentioned, "Oh, well, they're not going to be worried about me," but they said to me, "No, come in." I had to have a blood test done, wasn't corona-related. It was hormones, which I wasn't expecting. And so, it's taken me a couple of weeks to recover, but they were really good. I've had to speak to my GP. So the help is there. You have to ... Don't be afraid, give them a call and tell them. If you're really suffering, you shouldn't be suffering if your symptoms ... Because, all the stress ... Because, anxiety is one of the symptoms of menopause that can come on suddenly.

Allison Ferns:

And let's face it, everyone's anxiety levels are much higher at the moment. Hard to know what's menopause and what's corona.

Lorna Ive:

I know. I think if you can just keep a little diary, keep a little logbook each day, just how you're feeling and any symptoms that you're noticing. And if it's a pattern, then you contact your GP and talk it through with them, and see if they can help you. Yeah.

Allison Ferns:

Because you, yourself, had quite an early menopause, didn't you? How old were you?

Lorna Ive:

Yeah, well I think my symptoms all started just before I was 40. And then I was told when I was about 43 that I was in early-menopause. So I had to start HRT then, and yeah, it's been a long journey.

Allison Ferns:

But you've now kind of put all you've learned from your own experience into this website, where you try and help other ladies.

Lorna Ive:

That's right. Yeah. Yeah. I set it up, it's been a year now. I started my campaign last year, #UndoTheMenoTaboo, and it was really just, having gone through an early menopause symptoms myself, just for women to talk about it, to not be afraid to talk about it and not to feel lonely or scared if it's happening to you. And so that's how it started. And then it's developed into my website and it's a resource for women to use, to access information, to talk about it, and to get involved really. It's there for women to use, to gain information and just help other ... I don't want any other women to feel like how I felt, lonely and no one to turn to. So, yeah.

Allison Ferns:

I do think things are improving, in terms of people talking about it because years ago, people wouldn't even say the word, would they? It was all euphemisms like, "Oh, she's going through the change."

Lorna Ive:

"What's wrong with her?"

Allison Ferns:

Yeah.

Lorna Ive:

"She's grumpy." Yeah.

Allison Ferns:

But that's really sad to hear that you felt so alone.

Lorna Ive:

Yeah. I think because you always think your peer pressure ... You always think that everybody's going through the same ... You always think that everyone's going through it the same time as you, and that was quite hard because my friends weren't. And they didn't really know much about it, so they couldn't

really talk about it. So you're sort of put in this position where you don't quite know what's going on, and at the time there wasn't that much information out there. There was medical information, but it wasn't really relatable that you could read and get comfort from it, if that makes sense. It's much better now. So yes, so it was just really to help other women, to put them in the right direction for the right information and where to go, and to feel normal really, and to feel that you're not alone.

Allison Ferns:

So if there is anybody listening who is feeling ... well, they might be feeling alone, they might be just worried about the symptoms they're experiencing, I know you've got some kind of practical advice. So like, for example, recipes that can help you balance out your hormones naturally.

Lorna Ive:

Yeah, you can. Yeah, if you keep to a fresh diet, I think. Try not to snack, and alcohol, definitely-

Allison Ferns:

Yeah, that's easier said than done.

Lorna Ive:

I'd lay off the alcohol if you can because that definitely interferes with your sleep if you're awake at night time. And also, anxiety as well, that can add to it all. So you don't get a good night's sleep and that makes you feel lousy the next day.

Lorna Ive:

But recipe wise, I would just really eat lean meat, fresh vegetables, try and eat as much protein as you can. And yeah, just try and get mindful of what you're eating, really. Try not to eat the cake and the biscuits because that doesn't really help your sugar levels. So it's just best to eat as much fresh vegetables and fruit, smoothies and drink enough water as well. Because when you're sweating and hot flushes, you want to keep your water levels high. Keep hydrated.

Allison Ferns:

And how are you dealing with lockdown, Lorna?

Lorna Ive:

Not too well. I was coping okay until I had to go to A&E. It really hit me like a ton of bricks. It knocked me sideways. I was in bed for about a week.

Allison Ferns:

Oh gosh.

Lorna Ive:

Yeah. But no, I've not been too bad, actually. It's amazing how much you can fit into your day now, isn't it? You think when you're rushing around, that you've got no time. But then now we're at home, it's amazing how much you get done in a day. There's not enough time in the day still.

Allison Ferns:

Are you one of those then? Are you a doer? Have you got a list? Are you working your way through the chores?

Lorna Ive:

Yeah. I have to have a list with my meno-brain because I forget.

Allison Ferns:

Oh, go on then, make me feel bad. What have you achieved today? What have you accomplished?

Lorna Ive:

Achieved today? Oh, what have I been up to today? I actually had a video call with the doctor today. I had it this morning at 11 o'clock. Oh just bits and bobs for my website, and I've managed to ... I've made a, for your listeners, if they want to go to my website, I've made a downloadable menopause symptoms and a chart tracker. So you can download it and it's got all the symptoms. And then it's like a log and you can make a note of the symptoms and the date and how long is for, and then you can take that with you to the doctors.

Allison Ferns:

Oh great. Oh, that's really useful. Because sometimes when you get to the surgery and you're sat in front of the doctor, you kind of go a little bit blank, don't you? A bit like ... It gets a bit, "Oh, I don't really know now what I was going to say." So that's really useful. Well, you have been on it today, Lorna. Well done, you. You look after yourself, won't you?

Lorna Ive:

I will. Thank you.

Allison Ferns:

And thank you for joining us, Lorna Ive there from Wadhurst.

Allison Ferns:

If you want to get in touch with the show, you know I like to chat. You can always text me, 81333. Start your message with the word, Radio.