

New study confirms high prevalence of depression during the menopause transition

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Depression has been shown to be prevalent during menopause, affecting as many as 70% of women transitioning into menopause. A new study not only confirms the high prevalence of depression but also the greatest risk factors for it in postmenopausal women, as well as any relationships with anxiety and fear of death. Study results are published online today in *Menopause*, the journal of The North American Menopause Society (NAMS).

With the decrease in hormone production during [menopause](#), women are more prone to a number of psychological problems, including [depression](#), anxiety, irritability, nervousness, sadness, restlessness, memory problems, lack of confidence and concentration, and a loss of libido. At the same time, as women age, the [fear of death](#) becomes more pronounced. Depression and anxiety, which are the most common psychological problems that occur during the menopause transition, likely increase that fear.

In this new study involving 485 postmenopausal Turkish women aged between 35 and 78 years,

researchers sought to determine the frequency of depressive symptoms in postmenopausal women, the variables affecting it, and the levels of anxiety and fear of death. They then evaluated the relationship between all these variables and postmenopausal depression. They found that depression in postmenopausal women is a common and important health problem that requires further study. In this specific study, 41% of the participants were confirmed to experience some form of depression, although it is theorized that this rate was lower than in some previous studies because of the somewhat lower age of participants (average age, 56.3 y).

In addition, the researchers identified those risk factors that most affected depression in postmenopause. These included being a widow or separated from one's spouse, [alcohol consumption](#), any [medical history](#) requiring continuous medication, the presence of any physical disability, physician-diagnosed mental illness, and having four or more living children. They did not, however, confirm any relationship between depression and the fear of death, although the somewhat younger age of the study group may have influenced this lack of association.

Study results appear in the article "Depression, anxiety and fear of death in [postmenopausal women](#)."

"The findings of this study involving postmenopausal Turkish women are consistent with existing literature and emphasize the high prevalence of depressive symptoms in midlife [women](#), particularly those with a history of depression or anxiety, chronic health conditions, and psychosocial factors such as major stressful life events. Women and the clinicians who care for them need to be aware that the menopause transition is a period of vulnerability in terms of mood," says Dr. Stephanie Faubion, NAMS medical director.

Provided by The North American Menopause Society

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