

VIDEO: How caregiving affects menopause symptoms

In a first-of-its-kind study, Mayo Clinic researchers found that women 45–60 years old who are juggling family caregiving and menopause face nearly double the risk of moderate to severe menopause symptoms. Caregiving refers to providing support and assistance, such as feeding, cleaning and medical care to someone. Women in the sandwich generation juggle caring for both children and aging adults.

Dr. Ekta Kapoor, a co-investigator of the study, says women providing 15 or more hours of care per week are especially affected, with half of them experiencing moderate or worse symptoms. She says more menopause conversations are crucial to help women understand and navigate this life transition.

Video.	Audio
	Most caregivers are women, and a majority of them are in their late 40s and early 50s — the same time frame during which menopause happens for most women.
Woman kitchen daughter, pacing	How do they intersect? Mayo Clinic's Dr. Ekta Kapoor and her colleagues wanted to find out.
Ekta Kapoor, M.B.B.S. Internal Medicine Mayo Clinic	"It can take a toll on their physical health. It can take a toll on their mental health. And the same can be said about menopause symptoms also, which can significantly impact the quality of life in some women."
	Menopause symptoms are divided into three domains.
	"You have somatic symptoms, like hot flashes, night sweats, joint pains, fatigue and heart palpitations, etc. Then the psychological domain has mood problems, anxiety. And the urogenital has vaginal dryness and urinary symptoms."
	Dr. Kapoor says two findings from the study particularly stood out.
	"Menopause symptoms across all domains, and not just the psychological domain, were affected, which was a surprise, No. 1. No. 2, when we tried to adjust for stress and the overall mental health of the women, this association between caregiving and menopause symptom burden persisted."
	She says the research emphasizes the need for better support for caregivers going through menopause and for better education of caregivers and their healthcare professionals regarding treatment options for menopause symptoms.

11:05 -11:14	"Midlife women have unique challenges, and these are both in their environment and the way their body is changing, and that just needs to be acknowledged and managed better."
3	For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I'm Marty Velasco Hames.