# Episode 10 – Hearts aflutter

**Announcer:** This conversation has been made possible by the New South Wales Government's Menopause Awareness Campaign.

**Sarah White:** Hello and welcome. I'm your host Sarah White from Jean Hailes for Women's Health. When people think of menopause, they think of hot flushes, but there are so many other symptoms. In this series, we hear from you the things that are bothering you, the things that are confusing, and things you didn't know were symptoms at all.

Join us as we work through the Menopause Symptom Checklist.

I'm joined today by GP Dr. Sara Whitburn, who specialises in women's health, and we're going to start with a really important question that not enough people know about.

**Listener Question 1:** I got a fright the other day when my heart started beating quickly. I could almost hear it. Someone said it was normal during menopause, but it was really scary.

Should I get it checked out?

**Sarah White:** So, heart beating quickly, really? That's something to do with menopause?

**Dr. Sara Whitburn:** It can be. So with hormonal changes, our heart can respond to that and speed up a little bit, but it is important whenever somebody notices that their heart is racing to get it checked out. There can be some other causes that we would like to investigate to make sure that we can say that everything else is okay and that this is your heart responding to the changes that you're going through.

**Sarah White:** Now, I had read somewhere that heart issues after menopause is something that we do need to worry about.

**Dr. Sara Whitburn:** Yes, it can be. It's really important to be heart healthy as we go into the menopause, as our hormones fluctuate and then drop, it does impact on our heart and our vessels. The hormone that we often talk about, ‘estrogen’, is really protective for our heart and our vessels, but that doesn't mean that there aren't things that we can do to manage that natural transition. So it's all the things that your heart likes, having a healthy diet, making sure that it's low in fats, getting plenty of exercise. You wanna have exercise that makes you sweaty. So reasonable, moderate, exercise, 30 minutes, five days out of the week if you can. And also making sure that you get your checkups. So getting to see your doctor for blood pressure checks and other checks that they might decide you need for your own personal health risk factors.

**Sarah White:** And absolutely no smoking.

**Dr. Sara Whitburn:** Absolutely no smoking.

**Listener Question 2:** I've been getting these hot flushes at work where it just feels like heat is taking over my body, but I'm only 40. Am I too young for perimenopause?

**Sarah White:** Yeah, that's really a good one. Is she too young for perimenopause at 40 years of age?

**Dr. Sara Whitburn:** Unfortunately not. We know the average age of the menopause is 51, but there's actually an age range where it'd be quite common to be menopausal. So that's that year where you haven't had a period, and so that age range is 45 to 55. But perimenopause can be the time of when you start to have symptoms all the way up until when you have that last period, and that can be anywhere between four to ten years before you have that final period.

**Sarah White:** So someone experiencing those symptoms at 40, that's actually, could just be part of a normal range of age range.

**Dr. Sara Whitburn:** It could be. It is early and only about 1% of women would have an early menopause where they've stopped having periods. But there could be this perimenopausal time from 40.

**Sarah White:** If you are younger and you start to get these sorts of perimenopause symptoms, should you go and talk to your doctor?

**Dr. Sara Whitburn:** You should, because though it is a common thing to start to have perimenopausal symptoms in your forties, there are still other conditions that can present like the menopause.

So as much as we wanna reassure that it is possible, it's really important to make sure that we've ruled out other conditions, and so I would recommend if you get new hot flushes, to go and speak to your GP to look for those other causes. And if it's not that, then to start to talk about whether you need any support with these hot flushes.

**Sarah White:** Great. So this is exactly where something like a menopause checklist could come in. If you have a new symptom or it feels like it's really early to be experiencing it, you can fill in this checklist and just have that conversation.

**Dr. Sara Whitburn:** Yes, and I think those checklists are really helpful for that new symptom. But also sometimes there's symptoms that people aren't aware of that could be the menopause. So I think a checklist is a really great way to start that conversation. And we can also use that checklist to see how things are changing if you decide to use some treatment.

**Sarah White:** I guess I hadn't thought about that, you can use the checklist to see whether you are successfully managing the symptoms and see that they're going down in impact. That's actually, I hadn't thought of that one.

**Dr. Sara Whitburn:** So that can be really reassuring to you, and it just means that you're getting to have a check-in and you get to look at what's going on so that both you and your health professional are really feeling involved together.

**Sarah White:** That's it from us today. We know menopause can be tough, but it's worse when you don't talk about it. To support conversations with your doctor, your colleagues, your family and friends, you can download the Menopause Symptoms Checklist on the Jean Hailes for Women's Health website, and the New South Wales Menopause Toolkit.

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Information about the podcast

This podcast series has been made possible by the NSW Government's Menopause Awareness Campaign. For help talking about menopause, download the [Perimenopause and Menopause Symptom Checklist](https://www.jeanhailes.org.au/resources/perimenopause-and-menopause-symptom-checklist) and take it with you to your next medical appointment. For more information visit: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/women-nsw/toolkits-and-resources/perimenopause-and-menopause-toolkit>

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Information about Jean Hailes for Women’s Health

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