# Episode 5 – Zero to 100

**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 have two guests today, Louise Brown, Head of Public Health and Education at Jean Hailes, and Dr. Sara Whitburn, who's a GP who specialises in women's health. This episode is a serious one. We're going to tackle how menopause affects your mental health.

**Listener Question 1:** Lately I'm getting really anxious about things that didn't used to worry me. I'm worried about how I look, freaking out about work and, and money. We went on a holiday recently and I was panicking about the flight for weeks before.

**Sarah White:** Now it's not uncommon to be worried about how we look or worry about work and money, but panicking for weeks before going on a holiday sounds pretty unpleasant.

What do you think, Dr. Sara?

**Dr. Sara Whitburn:** Yes. What a shame to hear that this holiday, which I'm sure was gonna be a great time to relax and recharge, before that, the anxiety was too much and felt really panicky. Anxiety and panic can be a symptom of the menopause. As our hormones change, it does impact on our mental health, and so one of the symptoms can be anxiety.

**Sarah White:** Now you're gonna tell me though, that we're, there are things we can do to help alleviate some of that anxiety, right?

**Dr. Sara Whitburn:** Yeah, absolutely. So, it's putting in some healthy lifestyle things to really support this person's mental health. So taking time for themselves, exercising, trying to have a healthy diet, cutting down on things like alcohol and smoking. Using breathing exercises to calm ourselves down. Using mindfulness to try and stay in the moment can be really helpful. And also making sure that we're sleeping well.

But also if it is becoming really severe and, for example, this person, you know, couldn't get on the plane, it may be that it's time to talk to a health professional to talk about some of the treatments that we use for anxiety at any stage of life.

**Sarah White:** And this is just, there's no shame involved, it's just you've got hormones going on, you've got a lot, lot of life things going on. Take a moment and look after yourself.

**Dr. Sara Whitburn:** Absolutely.

**Listener Question 2:** Lately, I've been feeling very frustrated, irritable, angry, sad. It feels like I swing between all the emotions in one day.

**Sarah White:** That's a lot of emotions to go through in one day. What would you say, Louise?

**Louise Brown:** Well, I think it's really important for women to know that mood changes like this are actually a really common symptom of menopause.

Women don't actually realise the impact of these hormonal changes on, on their mental wellbeing, so their mood, the feelings of anger or irritability as she's described, or not being able to control the emotions. So I think firstly, that's really important to say, it's quite common.

A survey that we did at Jean Hailes a year or so ago, we had 1600-odd women respond, more than half of them asked for information on menopause and its impact on their mental health. So I think, you know, you're not alone is the first thing to say to it.

And I think also probably the most important thing is that if you've got menopause symptoms, they can be impacting on your mood. So my first message would be get help for managing the symptoms and that may improve your mood.

**Sarah White:** So that could be things like your sleeplessness or hot flushes.

**Louise Brown:** Exactly.

**Sarah White:** Things like that.

**Louise Brown:** If you're not sleeping, if you are having hot flushes and night sweats and it's waking you up and you're getting three or four hours sleep, of course that's gonna impact on how you're feeling mentally and emotionally.

So I think getting help with the symptoms is really important, but then also remembering to look after yourself. Take time for yourself, time to relax. Find things that actually help soothe your soul in a way. Getting out, exercising, eating well, getting good sleep if you can.

And then also, getting help if you need to. If your mood and irritability and things like that are really impacting on you, that it might be time to talk to your GP and perhaps see a counsellor if that's something that might be required as well.

**Sarah White:** Now obviously with such a lot of, of changes in mood during the day, that's going to affect the people around you. Is there any information available for, for example, partners or other family members that, that people can draw on?

**Louise Brown:** Yeah, look, we, we realise it can be really challenging for the woman, most importantly, but for the people around her, as you say. So we do have a fact sheet and some information online for partners, and things you can do to support them.

**Sarah White:** So being kind to yourself, treating those symptoms, and then if you need to go and talk to someone else about it?

**Louise Brown:** Absolutely.

**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

Jean Hailes for Women's Health is a national not-for-profit organisation dedicated to improving the health of all women, girls and gender-diverse people. For free, evidence-based and easy-to-understand health information, visit [www.jeanhailes.org.au](http://www.jeanhailes.org.au).

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