



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

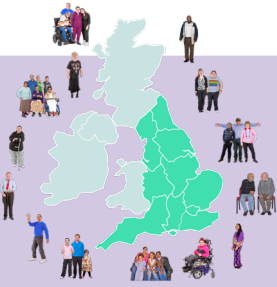
# Women's Health Strategy for England

20 July 2022

Easy read version



## Why we need a Women's Health Strategy



Half of the population are women.



But health and social care services have been designed by men for men. This means we don't know enough about women's health.



Women usually live longer than men. But they also live longer with illness and disability.



Other reports have shown that the healthcare system doesn't keep women safe and doesn't listen to them.



Also women in some groups don't get the same services as other women, or their experience of using them isn't so good.



The Women's Health Strategy for England is the plan to change this. It will listen to women and make sure women and girls can have better health.



The government did a survey to ask women what they thought about women's health issues. This helped the government to write and publish their ambitions for women's health called 'Our Vision for Women's Health Strategy' in December 2021. This plan now builds on this and explains what will happen.

## The changes the government wants for women's health in the next 10 years



The Women's Health Strategy is the plan for the next 10 years. These are the changes the government wants for women's health:



Women's health care and services are based on the life course. This means the different needs at each stage of life, like periods, having children, going through the **menopause** and getting older. They will be focussed on women and girls as individuals rather than on their health conditions.



Women feel listened to by health and care staff. Their concerns are taken seriously.



Women and girls know more about health issues from information, so they are able to speak up and make decisions about their own health. They will know how to get help and how to look after themselves.



Everyone will know more about women's health and there won't be embarrassment or secrecy about women's health issues.



Women and girls will have better health and everyone will be able to get the help and care they need.



Health and care staff will know more about women's health. They will be able to provide the best advice, support and care.



And family and friends will know more about women's health. They will be able to give better support.



Women feel supported to look after their own health and wellbeing needs at work, and when they care for others. At work, managers and workmates know how to support women. Everyone will be able to talk about health needs without being embarrassed.



There is more research about women's health conditions and they are involved in it.



Better information about women's health is collected, including about women's needs and experiences.

## What health issues will the strategy focus on?

The strategy says what will be done about these women's health issues;

- health conditions to do with having periods and babies
- getting pregnant, pregnancy, pregnancy loss and support after the baby is born
- **menopause**
- mental health and wellbeing
- cancers
- the health issues to do with violence against women and girls
- healthy ageing and long-term conditions



## What the government has done so far - These are some examples:



Improving the care for mothers and babies from women from ethnic minorities and living in poor areas.



More money for maternity services. There will also be more midwives and specialist childbirth doctors.



Improving support for women going through the **menopause**.



Reducing the cost of prescriptions for **HRT – Hormone Replacement Therapy**. It will also be easier to get.



The government has banned **virginity testing** and **hymenoplasty** through the Health and Care Act 2022. This is because these tests are based on a harmful idea that a girl or woman isn't a virgin or pure if her **hymen** has broken.



Help women at work with any health issues. This includes periods, having a baby, help to get pregnant, losing a baby during pregnancy and the **menopause**. It will help them to keep their jobs and return to work.



The sale of Botox and cosmetic fillers to the under 18s has been banned. These are used to make wrinkles in the face disappear and lips and cheeks seem fuller. Adverts for cosmetic surgery for under 18s are also banned.



Lots of money for family hubs and other work for families including mental health and breastfeeding support.

## The government's promises



Professor Dame Lesley Regan will be the Women's Health Ambassador. She will lead the work to deliver the Women's Health Strategy. There will also be a deputy Women's Health Ambassador. Her job will be to build relationships with community groups and women and girls across the country.



NHS England will also have a person to lead about women's health.



The NHS will encourage the growth of women's health hubs around the country. There will also be 'one-stop clinics' to support women.

Service providers who promote best practice across the country will be recognised.



There will be more research about women's health especially about periods and **menopause** and the parts of a woman's body to do with having babies.



There will be better links with data collected across the NHS, the Department of Health and Social Care, and NHS England



The General Medical Council (GMC) will teach medical students about women's health. It will include the **menopause**, having babies and about women's bodies. This means doctors will understand women's health better.



Improve the information about women's health on the NHS website. The government want this to be the place for women and girls to get good information about their health.



Improving care for women who experience pregnancy and baby loss. This will include giving a certificate to parents who have lost their baby before 24 weeks, to recognise their loss.





Work with NHS England to make sure NHS funded fertility services, which help women to get pregnant, are the same standard across the country.



Make sure health professionals know how to recognise and support women who are traumatised after being victims of violence.



Make sure women are involved in health research.



Improve how information is kept in the NHS.

## Making the plan happen



Everyone needs to make sure this plan happens, not just the government. This includes big organisations responsible for health standards, education of doctors and local health organisations and GPs.



The government will keep talking to women and community groups, to make sure the plan is working.



The government will publish a report in 2025 to give an update on its progress.

## What the words mean

### **HRT - Hormone Replacement Therapy**

HRT helps women with the symptoms of the menopause, like low moods and hot sweats. It is usually taken as a tablet, a gel or a skin patch.

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### **Hymen**

The hymen is a thin piece of skin that partially covers the entrance to the vagina. For some women, it may stretch or tear when they start having sex. But it can also tear from doing sports or using a tampon. So having a stretched or torn hymen does not necessarily mean a woman has lost her virginity.

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### **Hymenoplasty**

This is a medical procedure that tries to repair the hymen. It is an illegal operation in the UK.

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### **Menopause**

The menopause is when a woman's period's stop, usually in her 50s and she may have symptoms like mood changes and hot flushes.

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### **Virginity testing**

This is a test to find out if a girl or woman's hymen is broken. It is done by just looking at her private parts or a physical examination. It might mean she has had sex, but it could be broken for other reasons like playing sport or wearing a tampon. This test is a form of violence against women and girls.

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