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PREMATURE MENOPAUSE

At just 28 years old, runner Katie Ayres suffered ovarian failure, which made her prematurely menopausal. Here's her inspirational story

My periods were always irregular but I just put it down to having a contraceptive implant and didn't really worry about it. After I had a bad riding accident in 2017, when I broke several vertebrae, my periods just stopped and I began experiencing menopausal symptoms. It was as if my body had stopped working and had been put into trauma.

Tests revealed that I had Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI), a condition that means the ovaries stop producing eggs many years (and in some cases decades) before they should. POI also means the ovaries are unable to produce the hormones oestrogen and progesterone, which are important for a woman's health and wellbeing. I was having hot flushes about three or four times a day – suddenly I'd just be absolutely dripping. My energy levels were also very low. I do a lot of marathons but everything became a huge effort.

I went to my GP and then saw a private doctor who said that, because I had POI, I had to go on HRT. I heard about the [Online Menopause Centre](http://www.onlinemenopausecentre.com) ([onlinemenopausecentre.com](http://www.onlinemenopausecentre.com)), which

specialises in treating menopausal symptoms, and had an initial consultation about a year ago. I was given a personalised treatment plan of HRT containing estradiol, progesterone and testosterone.

Within six weeks, I was feeling better and more like my old self. I hardly ever have any hot flushes any more and it gave me my energy back and has enabled me to keep running. I also decided to try acupuncture and Chinese medicine, which made me feel better in myself, and I changed my diet. I eat very healthily (but I'm a chocolate lover!). I love organic products and I make sure I drink two litres of water a day.

After my accident, I wanted to be fitter and stronger. I love running so I started running every week. I remember I used to aim for 10 miles a week, then it started going up. I now do 30-50 miles a week. I found running made me switch off and forget all the bad that was going on in my life after being diagnosed with POI. Now my training is the best it's ever been. I do long runs, speed work, hill work and I love to go running with my friends from the Croft Ambrey running club. I enter races, which really motivates me to keep fit and faster and I love running for my club.

