

# Ep 39: Menopause

*with Niamh Barker*



# Inside the episode:

Hello and a very warm welcome to **Wellness with Liz Earle**. Today, you are getting two topics in one as I am talking to the founder of the luxurious cashmere **Travelwrap** company – many of you might have seen the feature we did on these really lovely, traditional, very high-quality blankets in a previous issue of **Liz Earle Wellbeing Magazine** as well as discussing the subject of depression & anxiety during the menopause. So what is the connection? The founder of the Travelwrap company is a qualified pharmacist, a corporate high-flyer and is also somebody who has been through anxiety & depression – or was it? – linked to the menopause. So a very warm welcome to **Niamh Barker**!



**You have a really interesting background in the pharmaceutical industry, how did you come to found this amazing travelwrap company?**

17 years ago I met and married my husband and I took on 4 step-children under 7. I was still working at Pfizer, but I always say to people that I come from an Irish family so I was used to the noise levels and it didn't seem like a big deal at the time. Then we had our two little girls in quick succession and I was a mum of 6 suddenly. By that time Pfizer was conveniently moving offices and I used that as an opportunity to exit. They gave me a redundancy payment and I thought 'I know what I can do instead of bringing in all these staff to look after the children: I can start my own business!'

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**So why travelwrap & what is the difference between good quality cashmere & cheaper, imported cashmere?**

When I was working for Pfizer I used to travel a lot by plane and it's as simple as this: I used to hate those awful blankets that they give you on planes and I thought "wouldn't it be lovely to just have a really special blanket for grown up girls?" Our cashmere comes from Mongolia and we only use the longest cashmere fibres from the cashmere goat. Cheaper cashmere tends to be shorter and it bobbles quite easily. I think about it as disposable cashmere – a couple of washes and it's not fit for purpose really. The other thing we get from our lovely Travelwrap is this depth of colour. We talk about a melange of cashmere: layers upon layers of colour and you get this richness and depth. You can see in our Travelwraps there's a kind of character.

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**Around the time that I was finishing my Good Menopause Guide, we had a menopause discussion and what you told me really sparked something which I am now investigating further. That is, this whole area of mental health, anxiety, depression and low mood that doesn't get recognised as a menopausal, or even, peri-menopausal symptom. Tell us your story.**

I think my peri-menopausal symptoms were almost masked by me and my personality, and it was only when I was really approaching the menopause did it become so bad that I started to think something was very wrong. I am very up and down anyway, I get very sad and then I get happy and my coping mechanisms are exercise and meditation. It wasn't until my period stopped completely that I felt like I literally

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lost the plot. I couldn't think straight, my running - I had been able to run half marathons without doing much preparation previously - I could hardly run a 5K & my lack of sleep was my biggest catalyst for going to see somebody. I was literally at one point waking up every single hour and sleep deprivation leads to all kinds of awful symptoms throughout the day. I had a crazy mood: I remember once my husband was five minutes late when coming to London to visit my sister and I was bashing on his door. The rage, the anger, and the intolerance! When I look back on it, it feels crazy and I'm laughing now but at the time it felt so real.

### Did your GP try to prescribe you anti-depressants?

My GP was very well-meaning but didn't know an awful lot about menopause. I think they would have prescribed antidepressants very quickly, but I had this second sense of knowing that this wasn't what it was. There was just more to it.

## More from Niamh:

Niamh's Twitter: [@Travelwrap](https://twitter.com/Travelwrap)

Travelwrap Company: [www.thetravelwrapcompany.com](http://www.thetravelwrapcompany.com)

